Why Raeliana Ended Up at the Duke's Mansion
1
Whale
Original story by
Milcha

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Volume 1

A His-and-Hers Contract

Whale

Original story by
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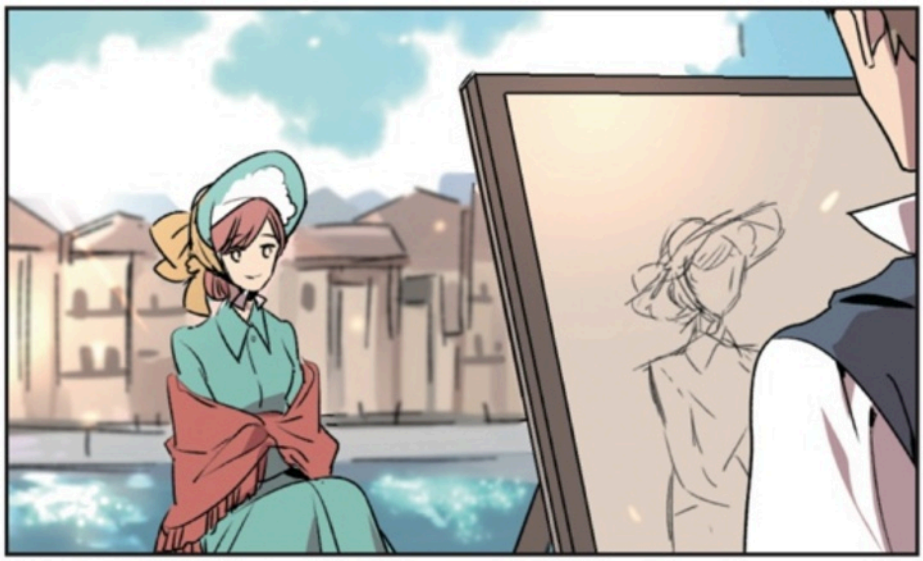
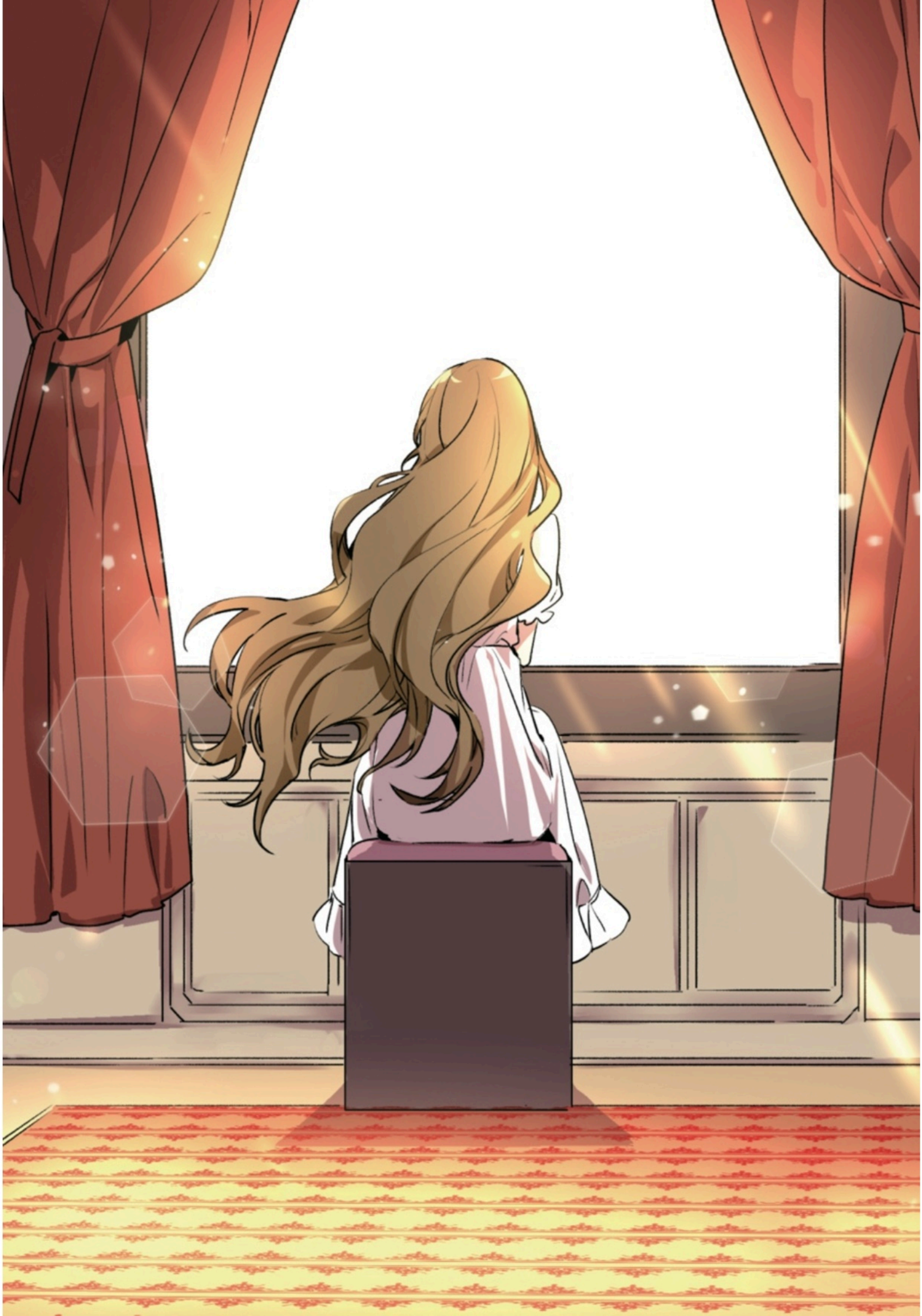
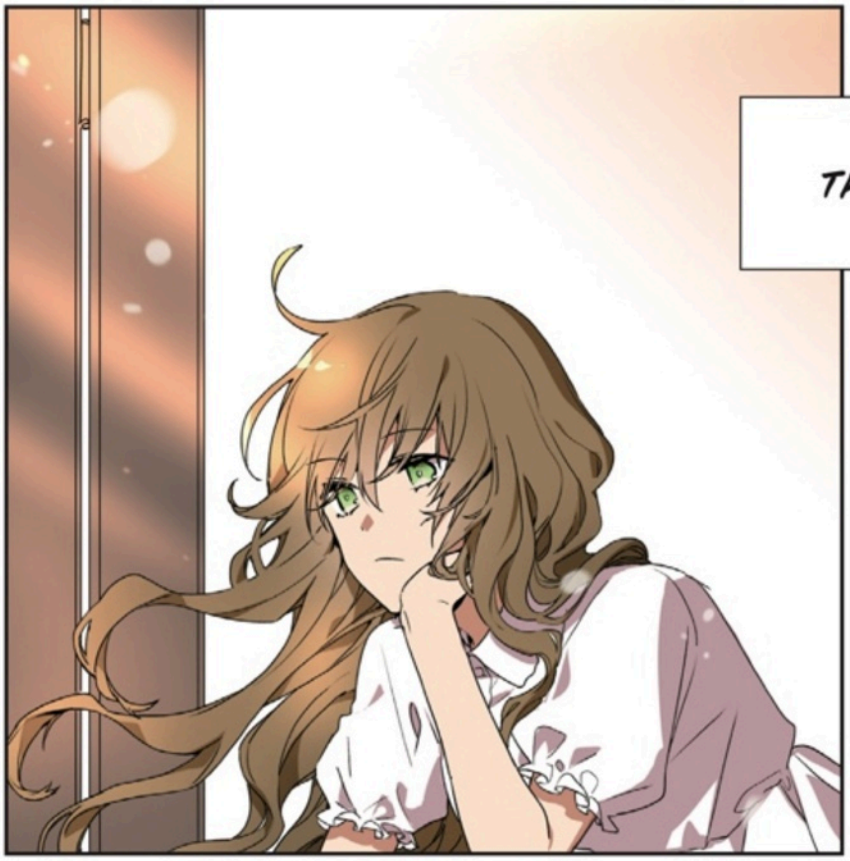
Prologue

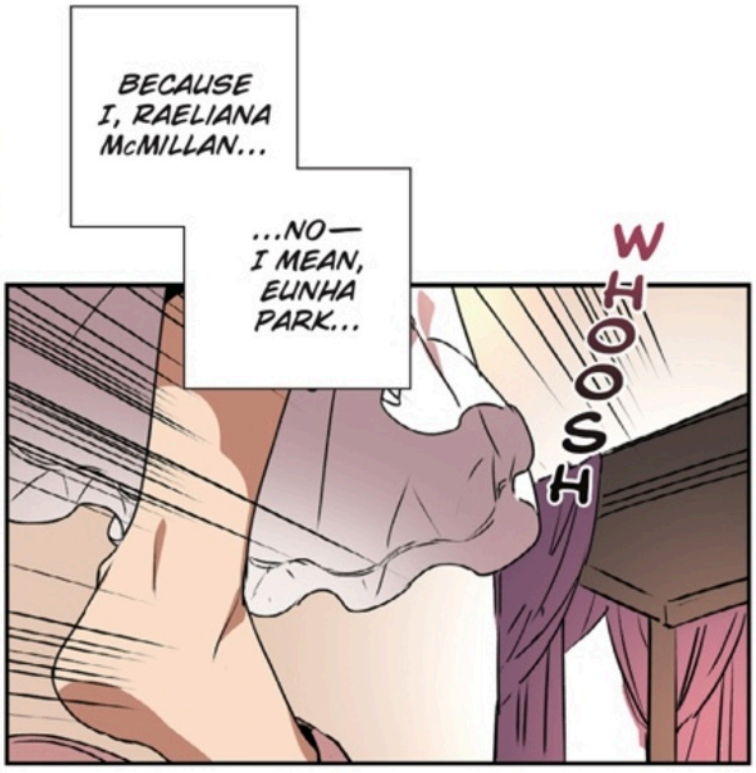


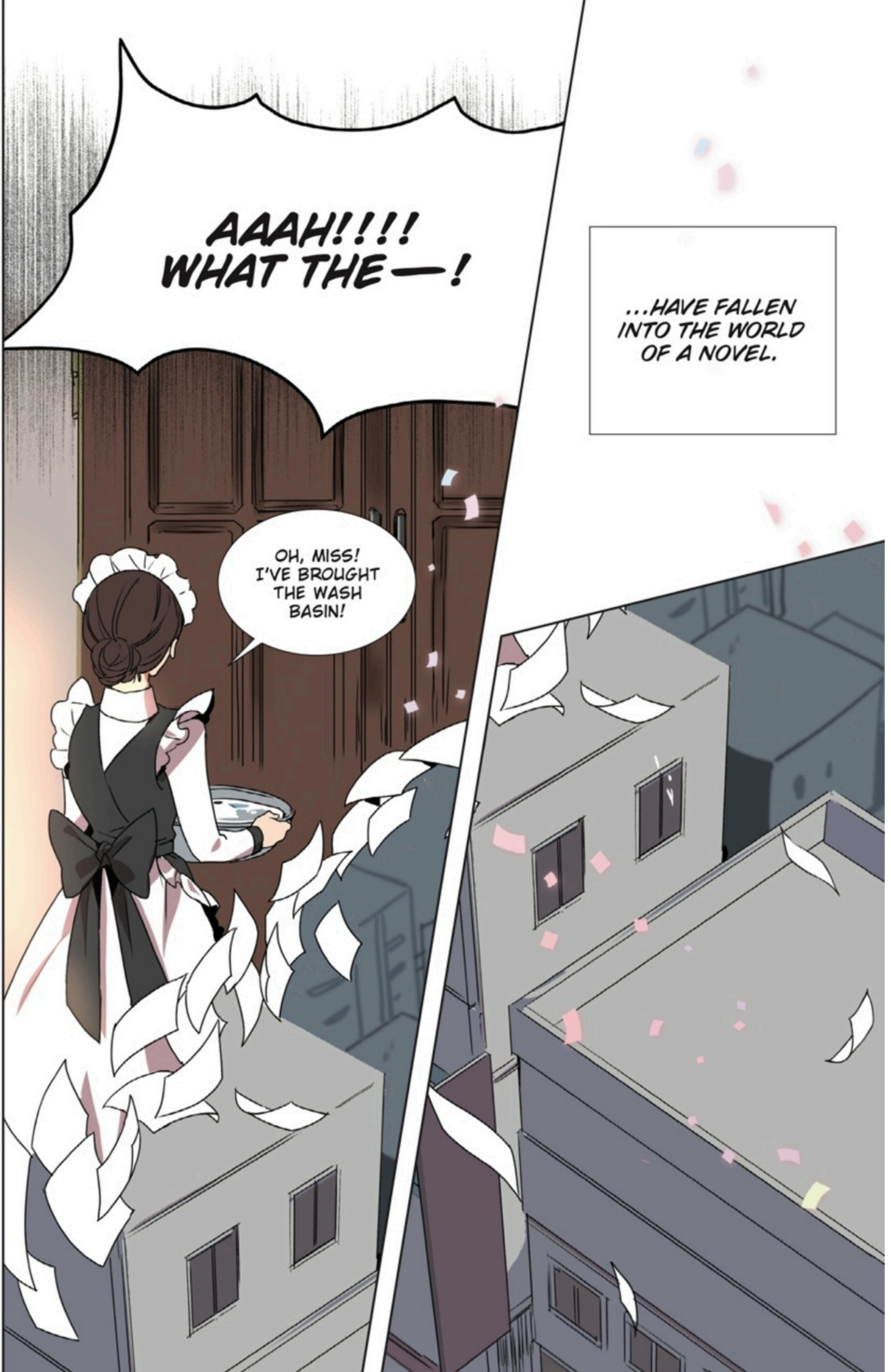


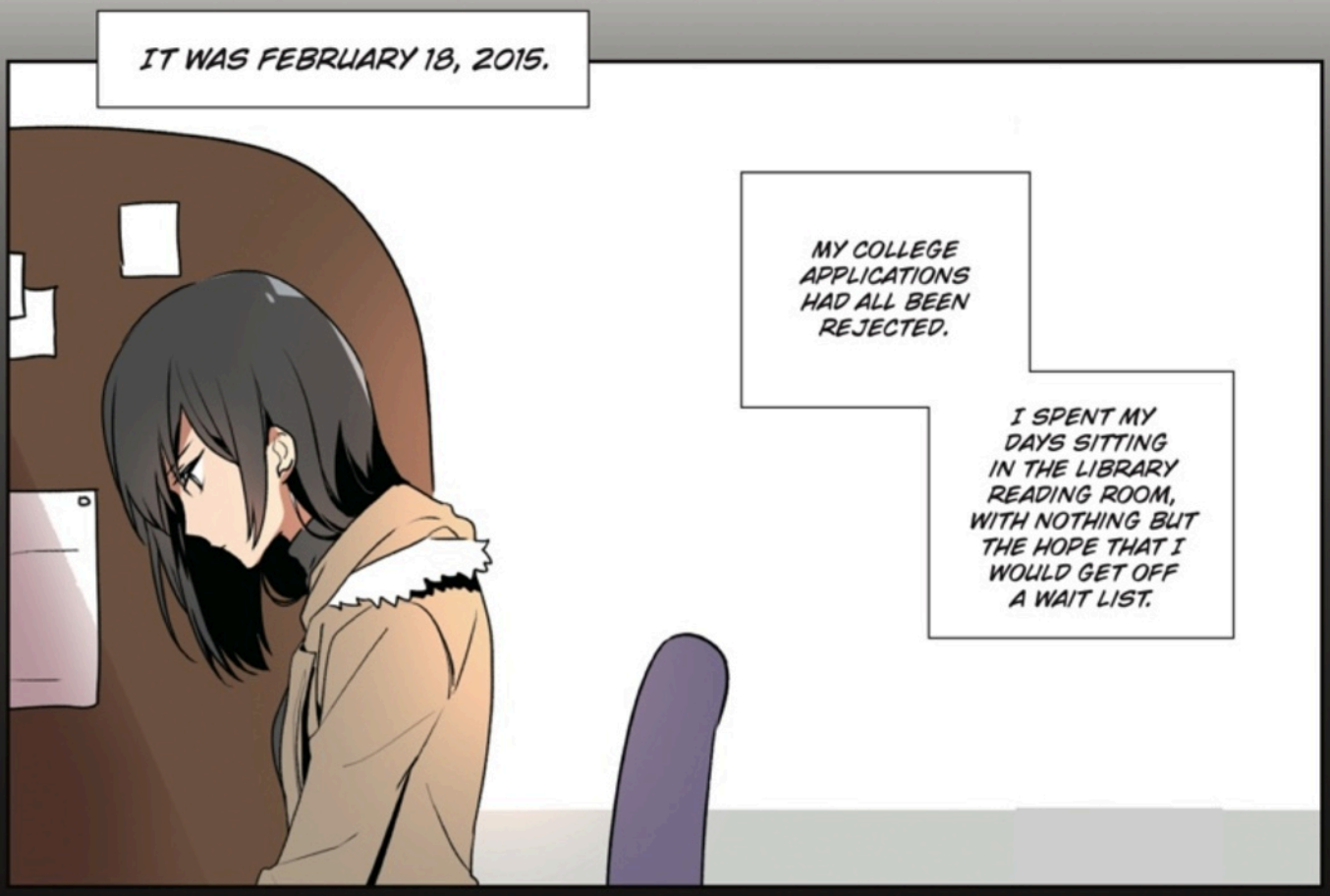

THIS IS NOT...

...MY HOME.

SHF


BECAUSE I, RAELIANA McMILLAN...
...NO— I MEAN, EUNHA PARK...
WHOOSH

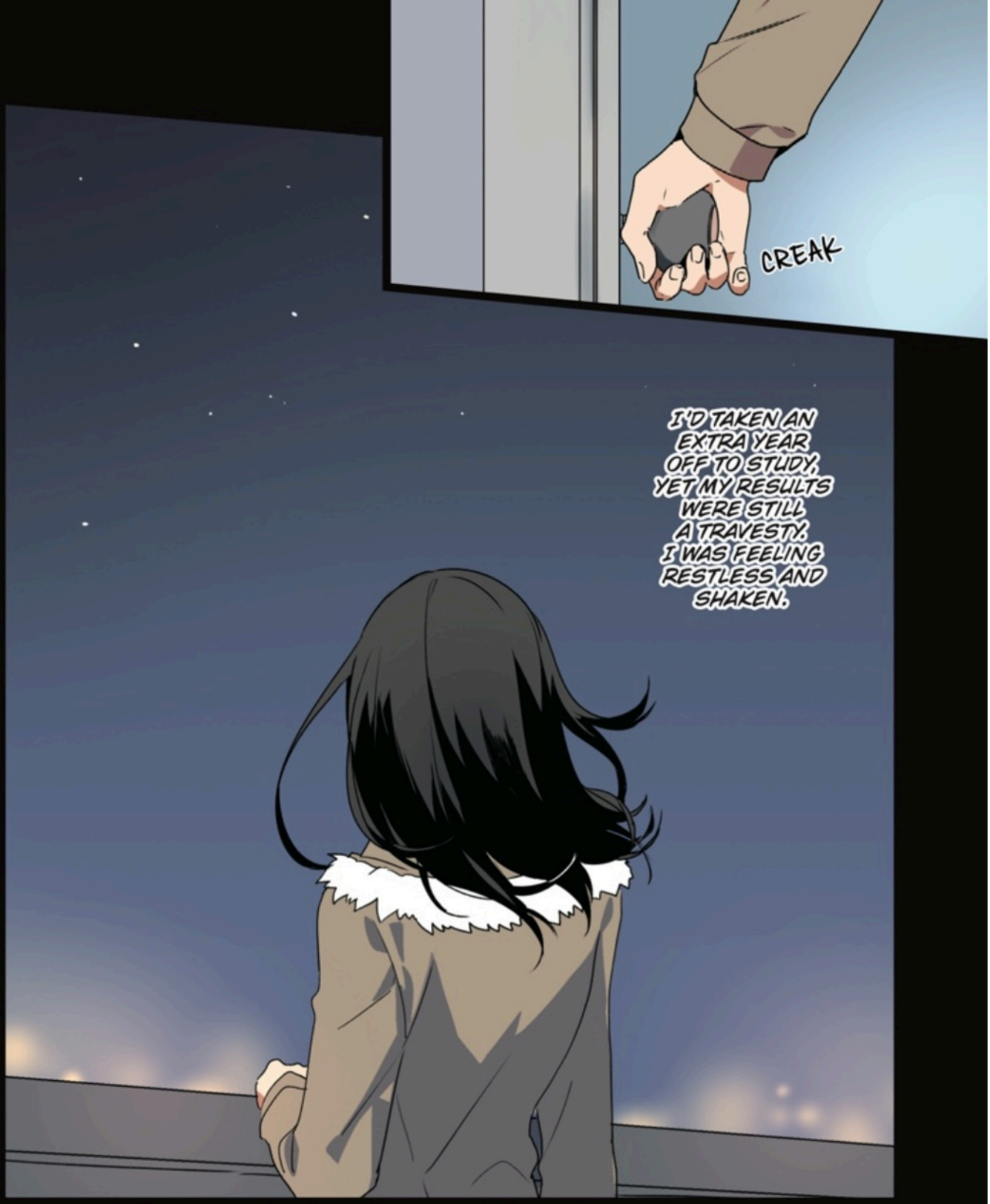

AAAH!!!! WHAT THE—!
...HAVE FALLEN INTO THE WORLD OF A NOVEL.
OH, MISS! I'VE BROUGHT THE WASH BASIN!


IT WAS FEBRUARY 18, 2015.
MY COLLEGE APPLICATIONS HAD ALL BEEN REJECTED.
I SPENT MY DAYS SITTING IN THE LIBRARY READING ROOM, WITH NOTHING BUT THE HOPE THAT I WOULD GET OFF A WAIT LIST.

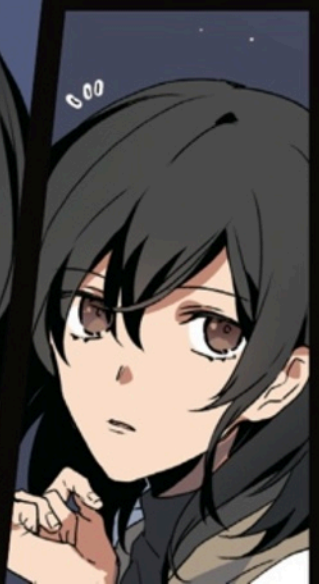
UGH.....

SEEMS LIKE NO SPACES HAVE OPENED UP.

I SHOULD GET SOME AIR OR SOMETHING.
WHERE YA GOING, EUNHA?
STEPPING OUT FOR A SEC.


CREAK
I'D TAKEN AN EXTRA YEAR OFF TO STUDY, YET MY RESULTS WERE STILL A TRAVESTY. I WAS FEELING RESTLESS AND SHAKEN.

WHAT EVEN IS LIFE...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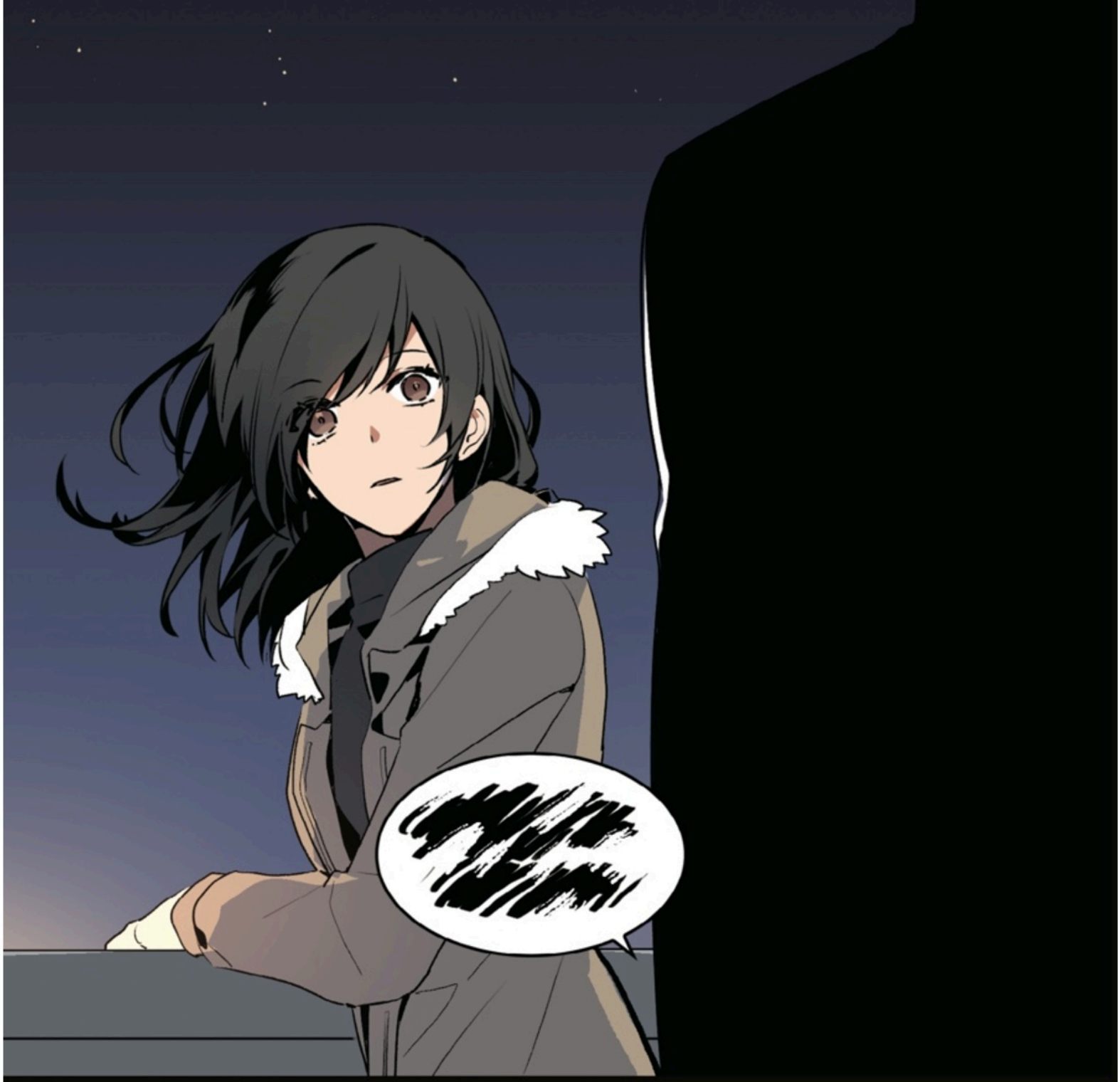


I TALKED WITH SOMEONE.

NO MEMORIES REMAIN, SAVE FOR THE APPREHENSION AND ALLURE OF TALKING WITH A STRANGER...

...AND A FLEETING FEELING OF JOY.

BNNN

WHOA...!!

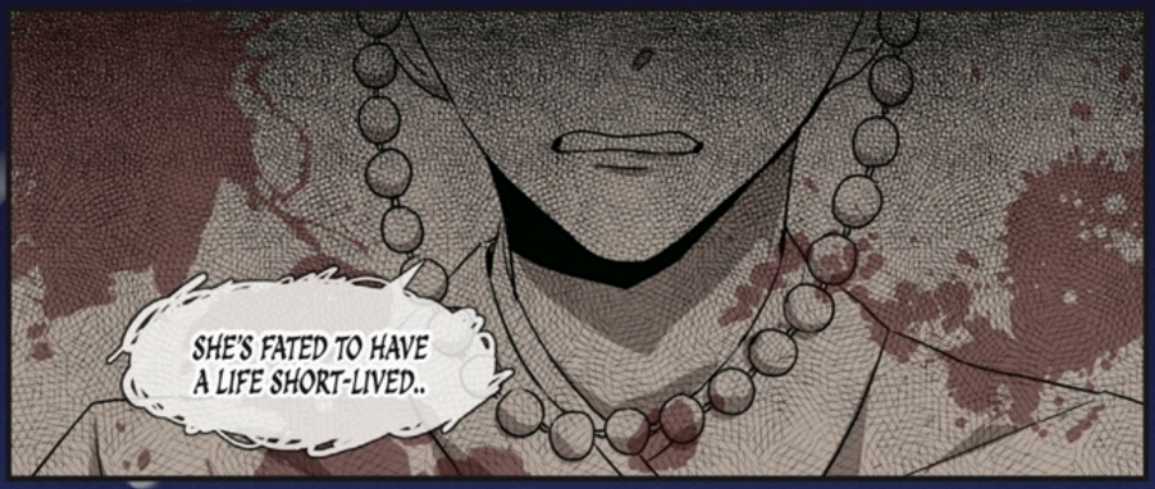
Greetings, You've be
PARK. You've be
offered a place at
XX University. We
congratulate you.
For tuition payment
and additional
information, please
see the included
link. goo.gs...
...!!!!!!!!!!

I'M
IN!!!!

I'VE BEEN
ACCEPTED
!!!!
SHOVE

FWOOOOSH

SMIRK
MOM!
BIG BRO!



INDEED, IT WAS...

...AN EARLY END FOR ME.

AND NOW, HERE I AM.
HOW... AM I STILL ALIVE?
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I SEE MYSELF, IT'S STILL STRANGE.
I MEAN, HOW DOES ANYBODY GET USED TO BEING THIS BEAUTIFUL?

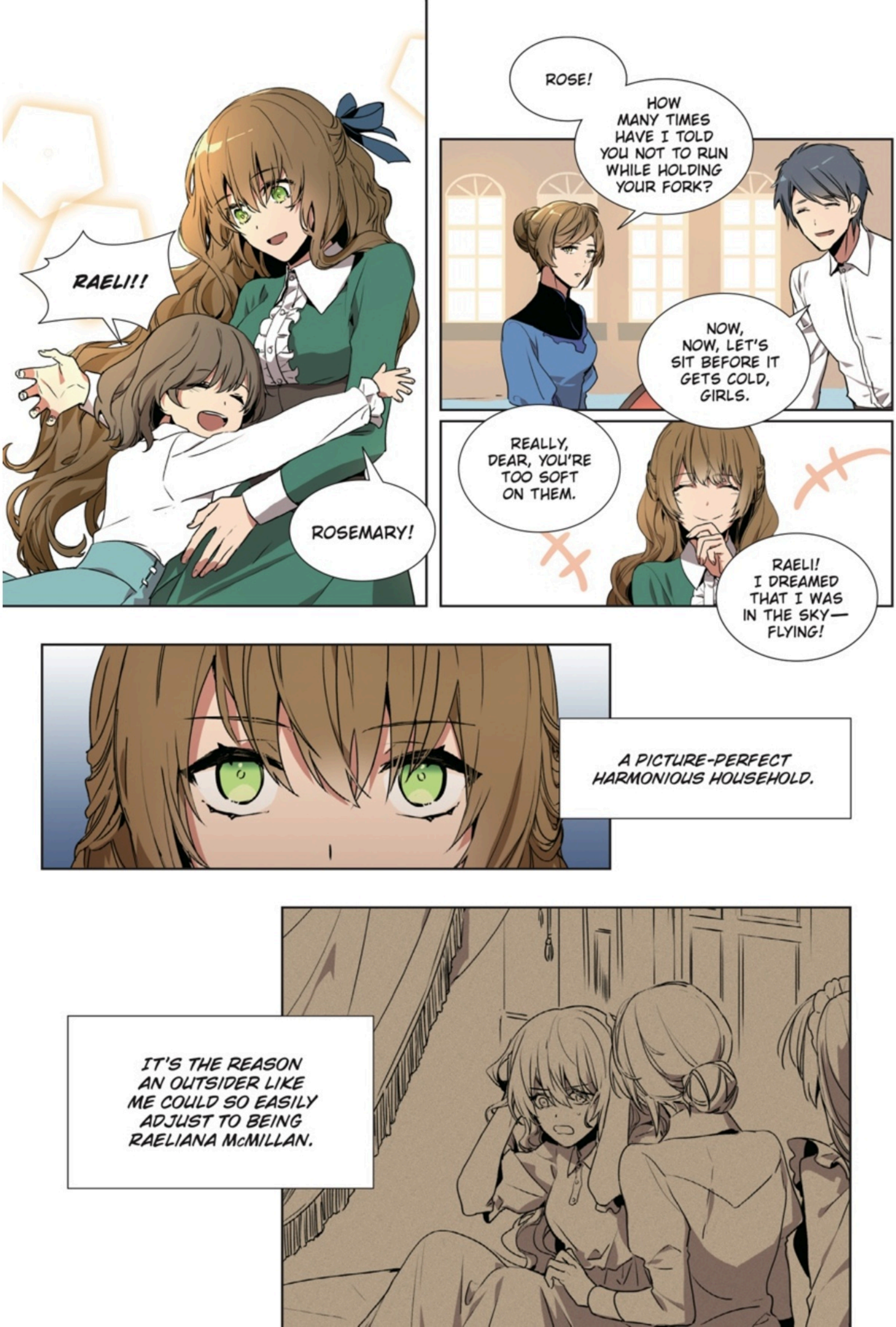
MISS! DINNER IS SERVED.
AH, RIGHT. BE THERE SOON.

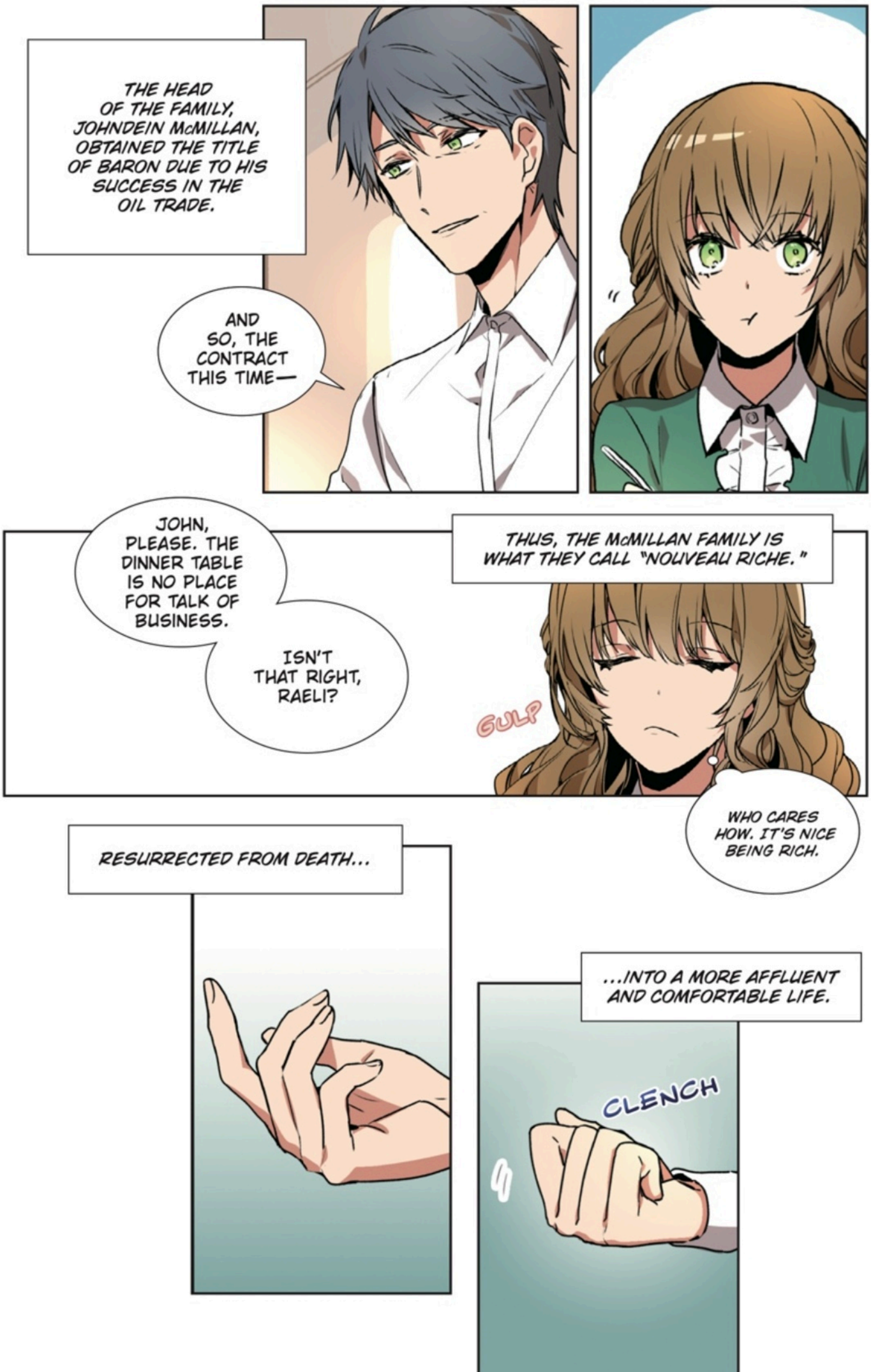
CLACK

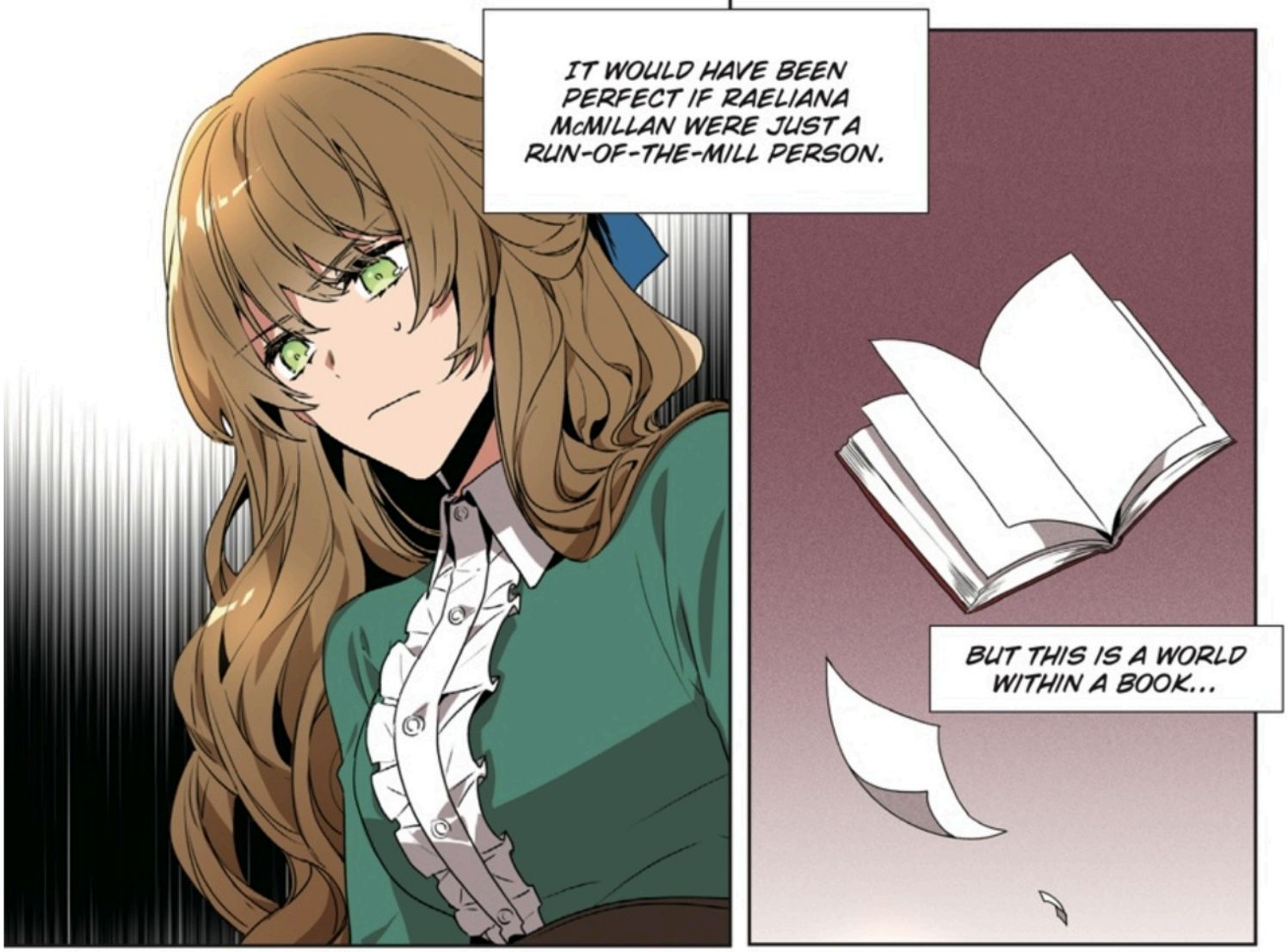
RAELI.

DID YOU HAVE A GOOD REST?
I DID. AND YOU, FATHER? DID YOU SLEEP WELL?

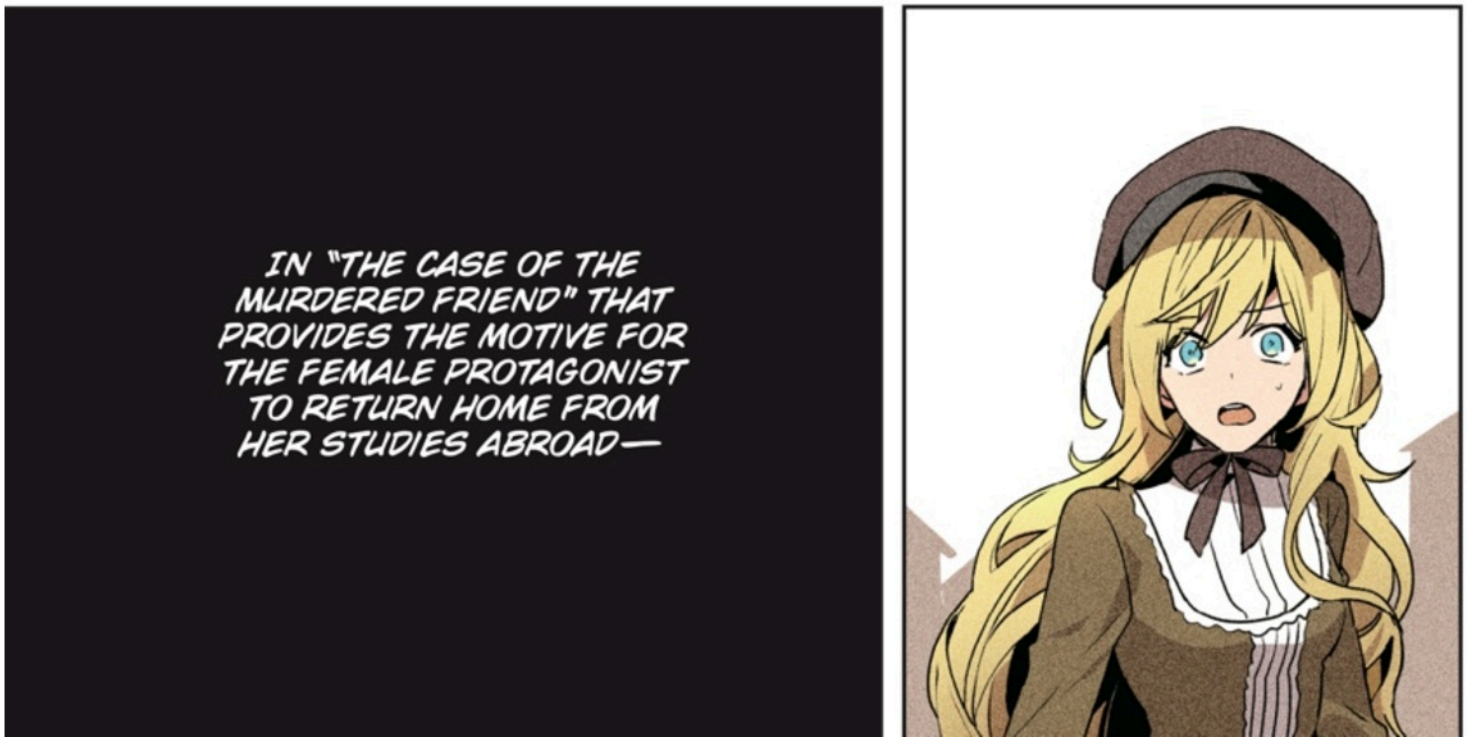
DASH


RAELI!!
ROSEMARY!
ROSE!
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO RUN WHILE HOLDING YOUR FORK?
NOW, NOW, LET'S SIT BEFORE IT GETS COLD, GIRLS.
REALLY, DEAR, YOU'RE TOO SOFT ON THEM.
RAELI! I DREAMED THAT I WAS IN THE SKY— FLYING!
A PICTURE-PERFECT HARMONIOUS HOUSEHOLD.
IT'S THE REASON AN OUTSIDER LIKE ME COULD SO EASILY ADJUST TO BEING RAELIANA McMILLAN.

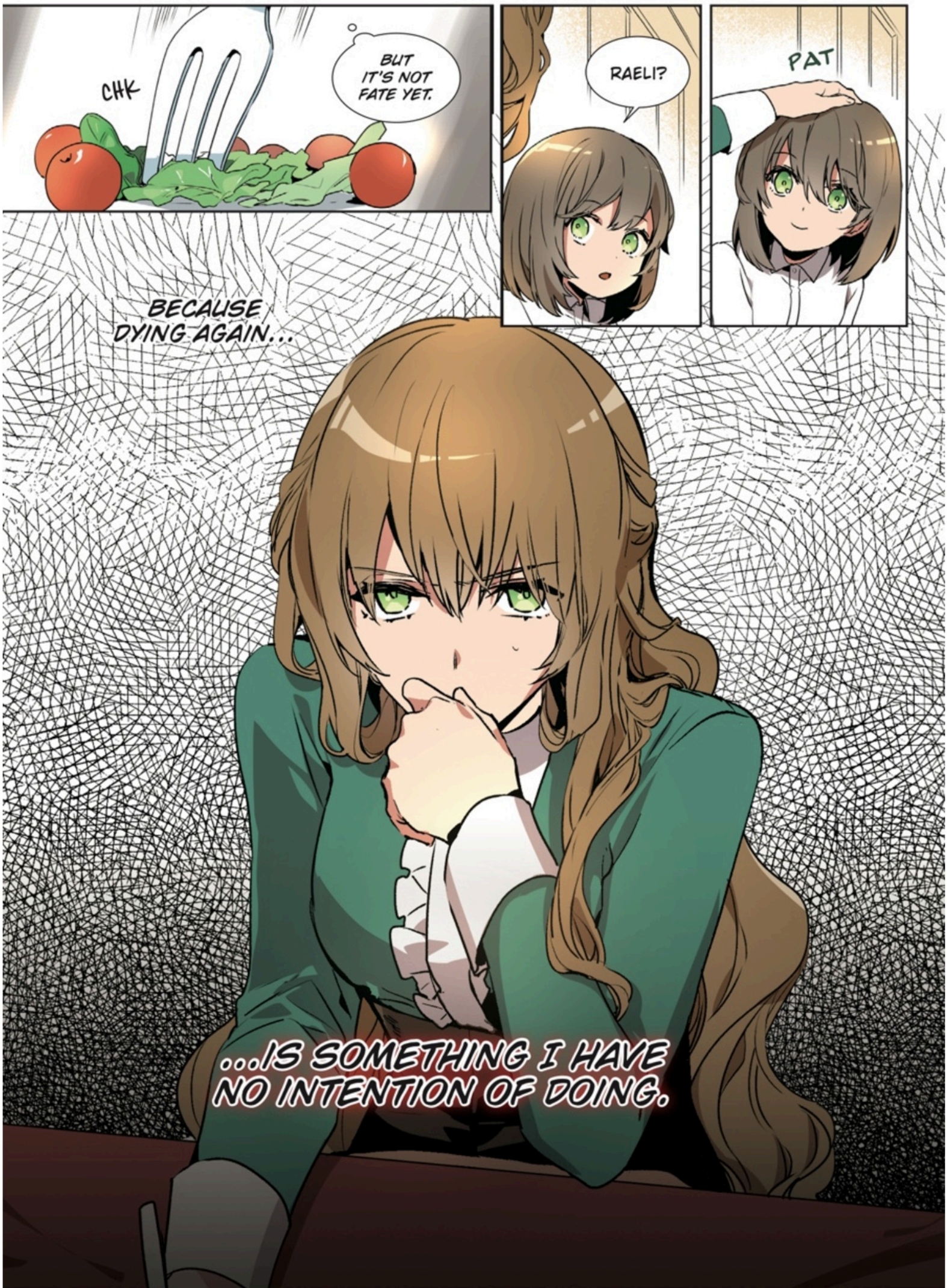

THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY, JOHNDEIN McMILLAN, OBTAINED THE TITLE OF BARON DUE TO HIS SUCCESS IN THE OIL TRADE.
AND SO, THE CONTRACT THIS TIME—
JOHN, PLEASE. THE DINNER TABLE IS NO PLACE FOR TALK OF BUSINESS.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, RAELI?
THUS, THE McMILLAN FAMILY IS WHAT THEY CALL "NOUVEAU RICHE."
GULP
WHO CARES HOW. IT'S NICE BEING RICH.
RESURRECTED FROM DEATH...
...INTO A MORE AFFLUENT AND COMFORTABLE LIFE.
CLENCH


IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PERFECT IF RAELIANA McMILLAN WERE JUST A RUN-OF-THE-MILL PERSON.
BUT THIS IS A WORLD WITHIN A BOOK...

...AND RAELIANA IS A TRIVIAL SIDE CHARACTER.


IN "THE CASE OF THE MURDERED FRIEND" THAT PROVIDES THE MOTIVE FOR THE FEMALE PROTAGONIST TO RETURN HOME FROM HER STUDIES ABROAD—

...RAELIANA IS THAT "FRIEND."
HER DESTINY IS TO HAVE "A LIFE SHORT-LIVED."


CHK
BUT IT'S NOT FATE YET.
RAELI?
PAT
BECAUSE DYING AGAIN...
...IS SOMETHING I HAVE NO INTENTION OF DOING.

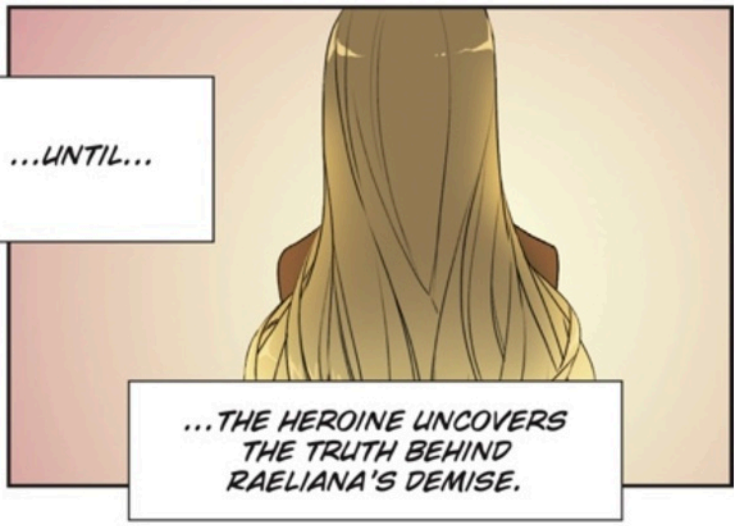
Stage 1

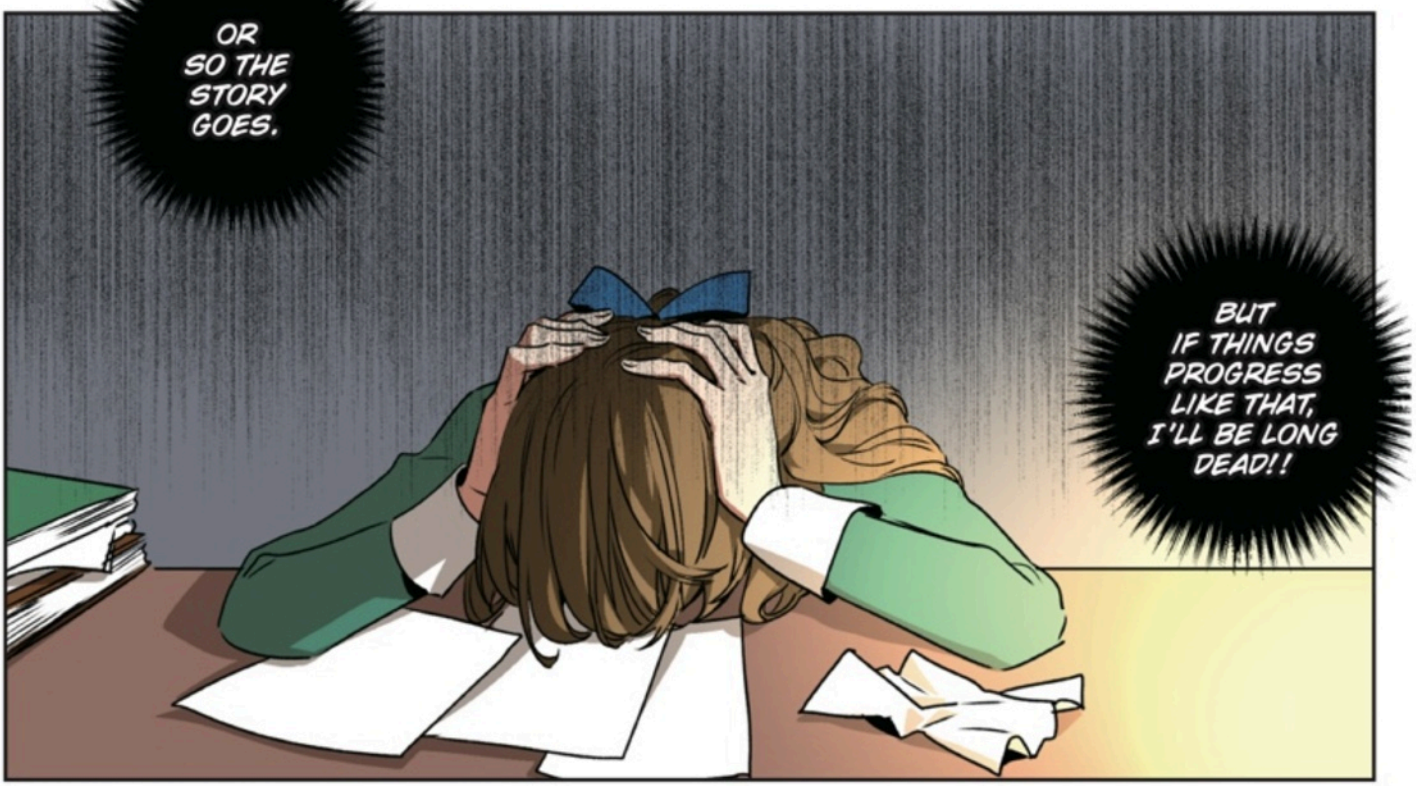
Raeliana McMillan Wants to Live

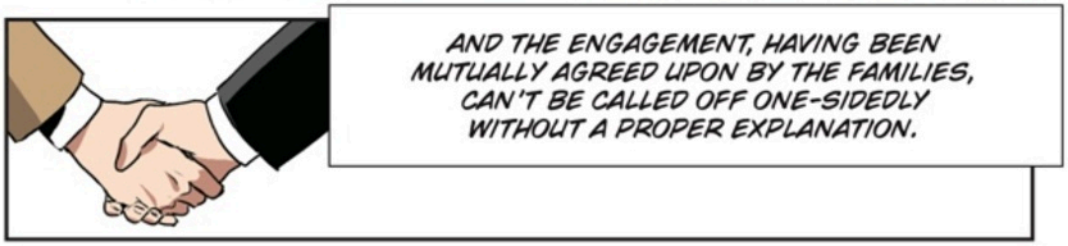
FRANCIS BROOKS—
RAELIANA McMILLAN'S FIANCÉ...
...AND THE INSTIGATOR OF EVERYTHING— THE CULPRIT IN THE CASE OF RAELIANA'S MURDER.
HER PLOTTED CAUSE OF DEATH IS ARSENIC POISONING.
CRUMPLE
FRANCIS MIXED IT INTO THE TEA HER SERVANTS BREW FOR HER EVERY NIGHT.

WITH RAELIANA DEAD AND BROOKS ALREADY HAVING GAINED THE TRUST OF THE McMILLANS...
...WHEEDLING INTO THE FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF THE GRIEVING FAMILY WAS ALL BUT A DONE DEAL.

BROOKS WAS SET TO COMPLETELY TAKE OVER THEIR COMPANY...


...UNTIL...
...THE HEROINE UNCOVERS THE TRUTH BEHIND RAELIANA'S DEMISE.


OR SO THE STORY GOES.
BUT IF THINGS PROGRESS LIKE THAT, I'LL BE LONG DEAD!!

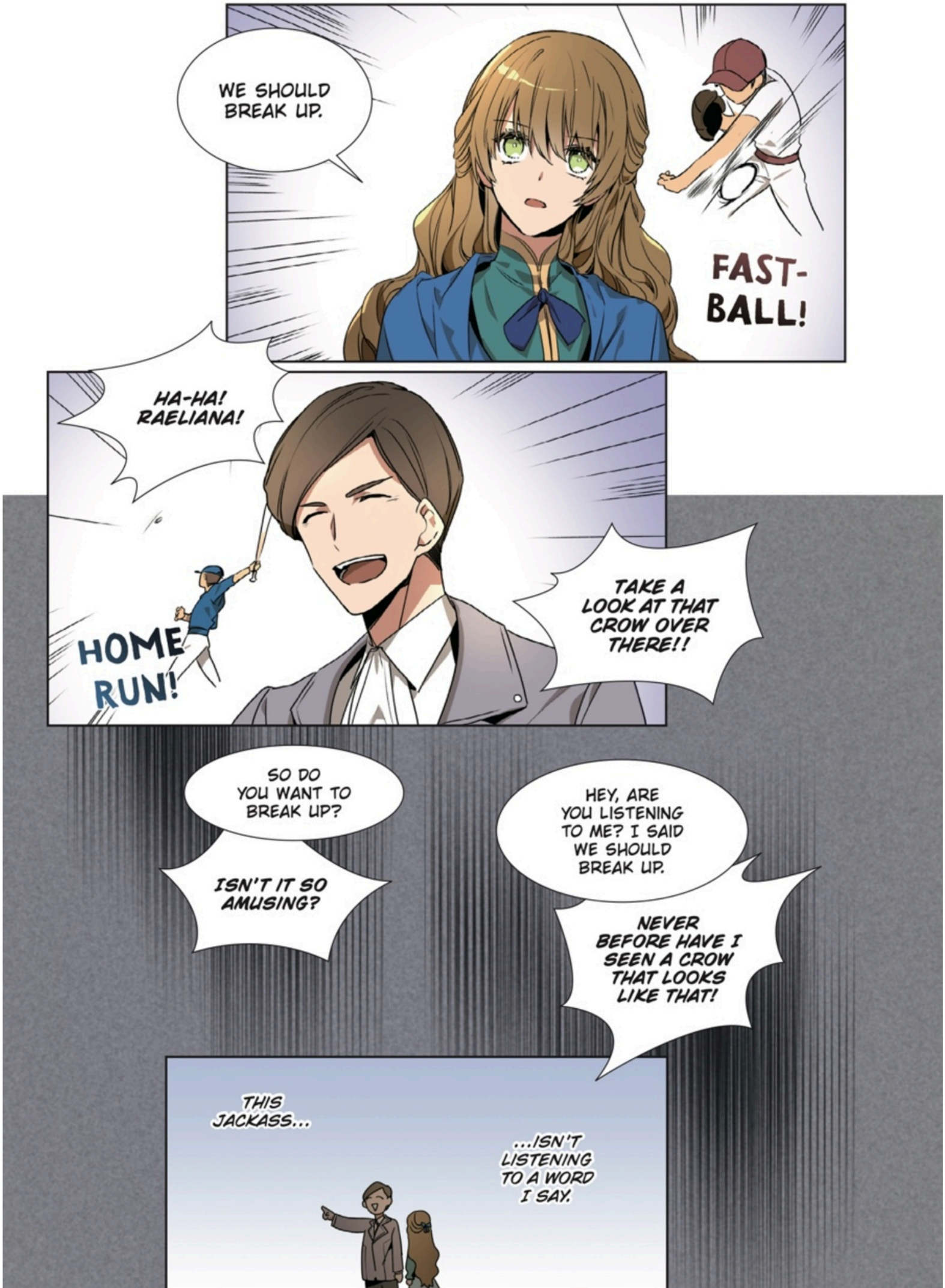


YET IF I WERE TO TRY TO EXPOSE THE FACT THAT FRANCIS BROOKS IS TRYING TO KILL ME...

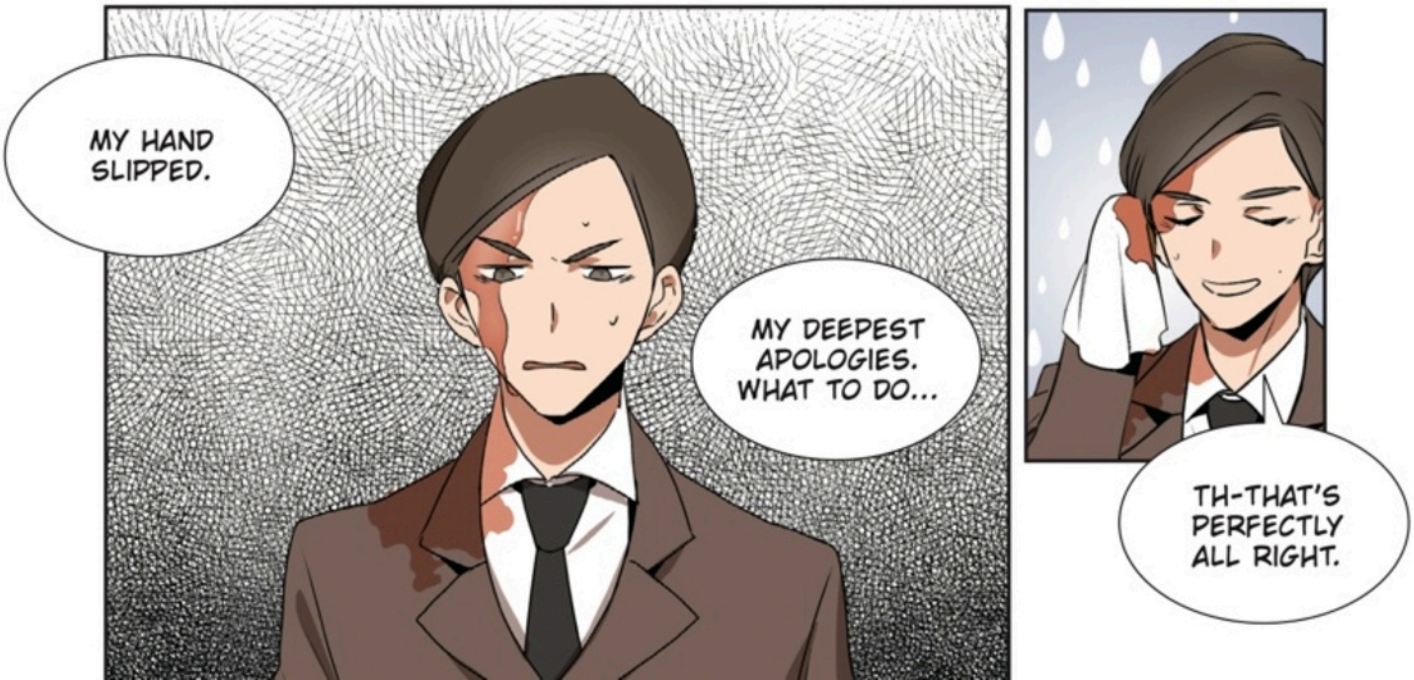
...WHO'D BELIEVE IT?!

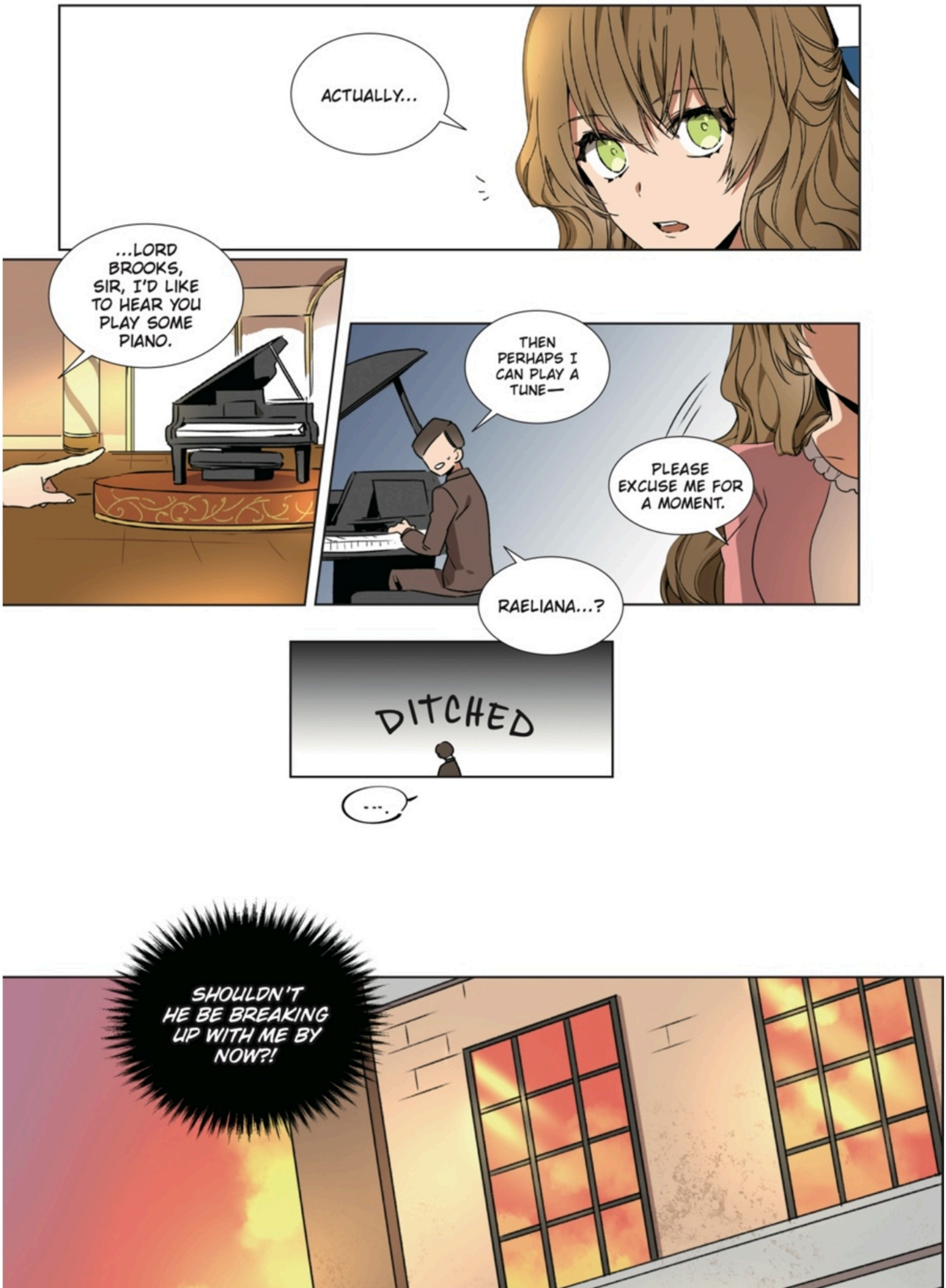
THEY'D SEND ME STRAIGHT OFF TO THE PSYCHIATRIC WARD! SINCE THERE ARE MENTAL HOSPITALS IN THIS WORLD TOO...

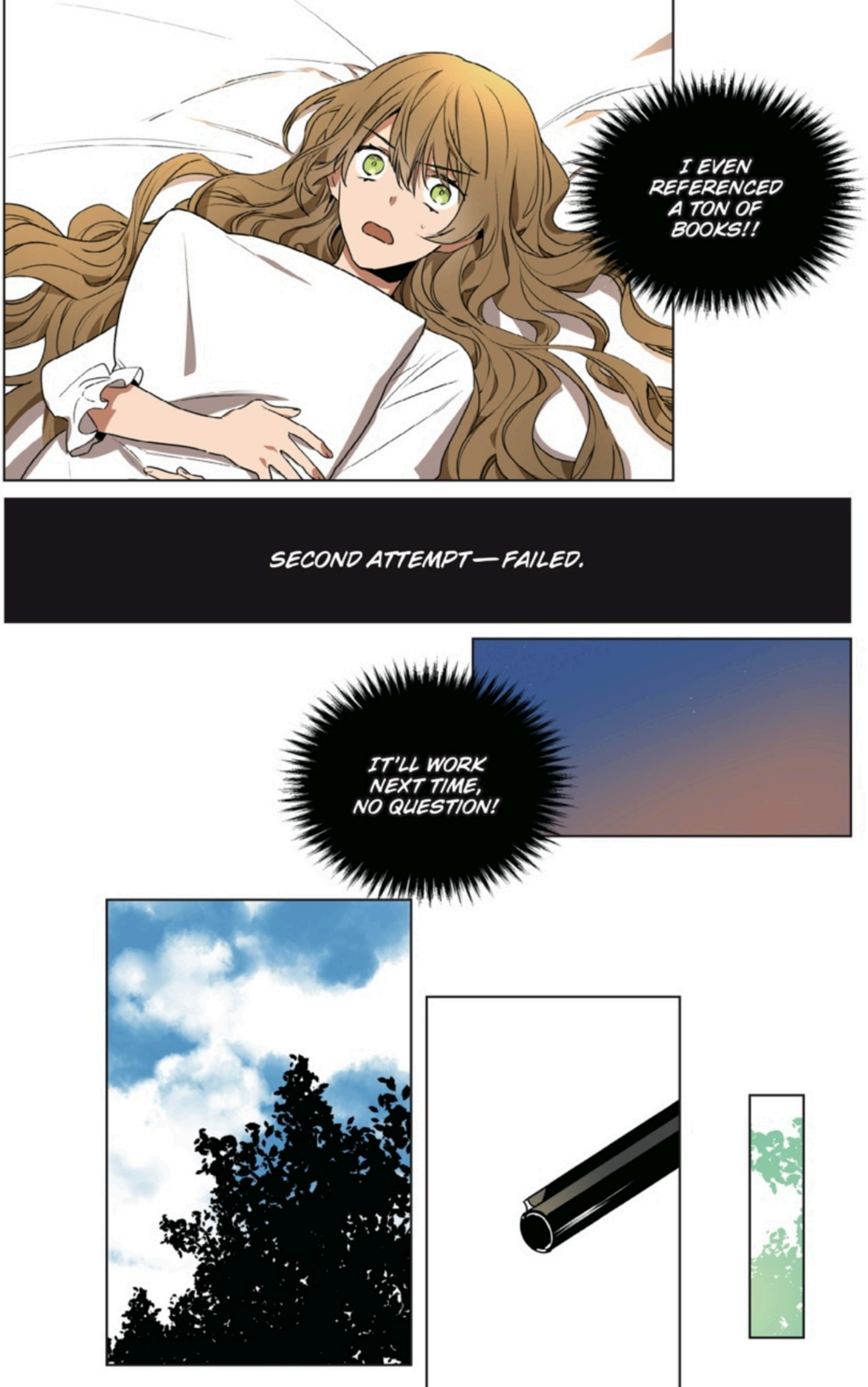
I JUST NEED TO MAKE THIS GUY GET SICK OF ME!


WE SHOULD BREAK UP.
FAST-BALL!
HA-HA! RAELIANA!
HOME RUN!
TAKE A LOOK AT THAT CROW OVER THERE!!
SO DO YOU WANT TO BREAK UP?
ISN'T IT SO AMUSING?
HEY, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME? I SAID WE SHOULD BREAK UP.
NEVER BEFORE HAVE I SEEN A CROW THAT LOOKS LIKE THAT!
THIS JACKASS...
...ISN'T LISTENING TO A WORD I SAY.

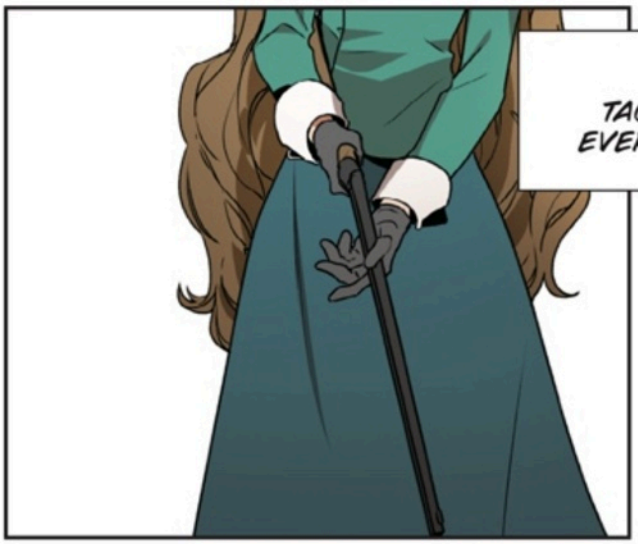
FIRST ATTEMPT — FAILED.



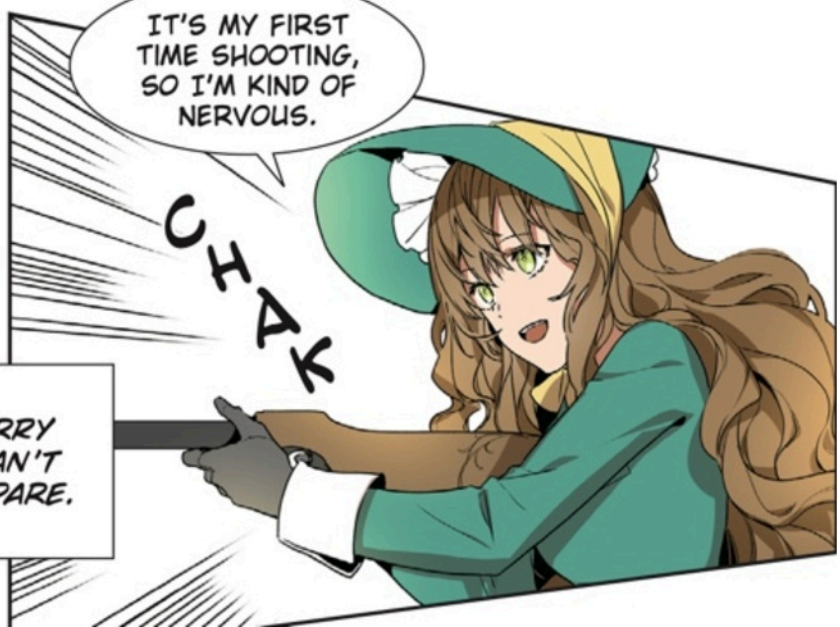

ACTUALLY...
...LORD BROOKS, SIR, I'D LIKE TO HEAR YOU PLAY SOME PIANO.
THEN PERHAPS I CAN PLAY A TUNE—
PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT.
RAELIANA...?
DITCHED
...
SHOULDN'T HE BE BREAKING UP WITH ME BY NOW?!


I EVEN REFERENCED A TON OF BOOKS!!
SECOND ATTEMPT — FAILED.
IT'LL WORK NEXT TIME, NO QUESTION!

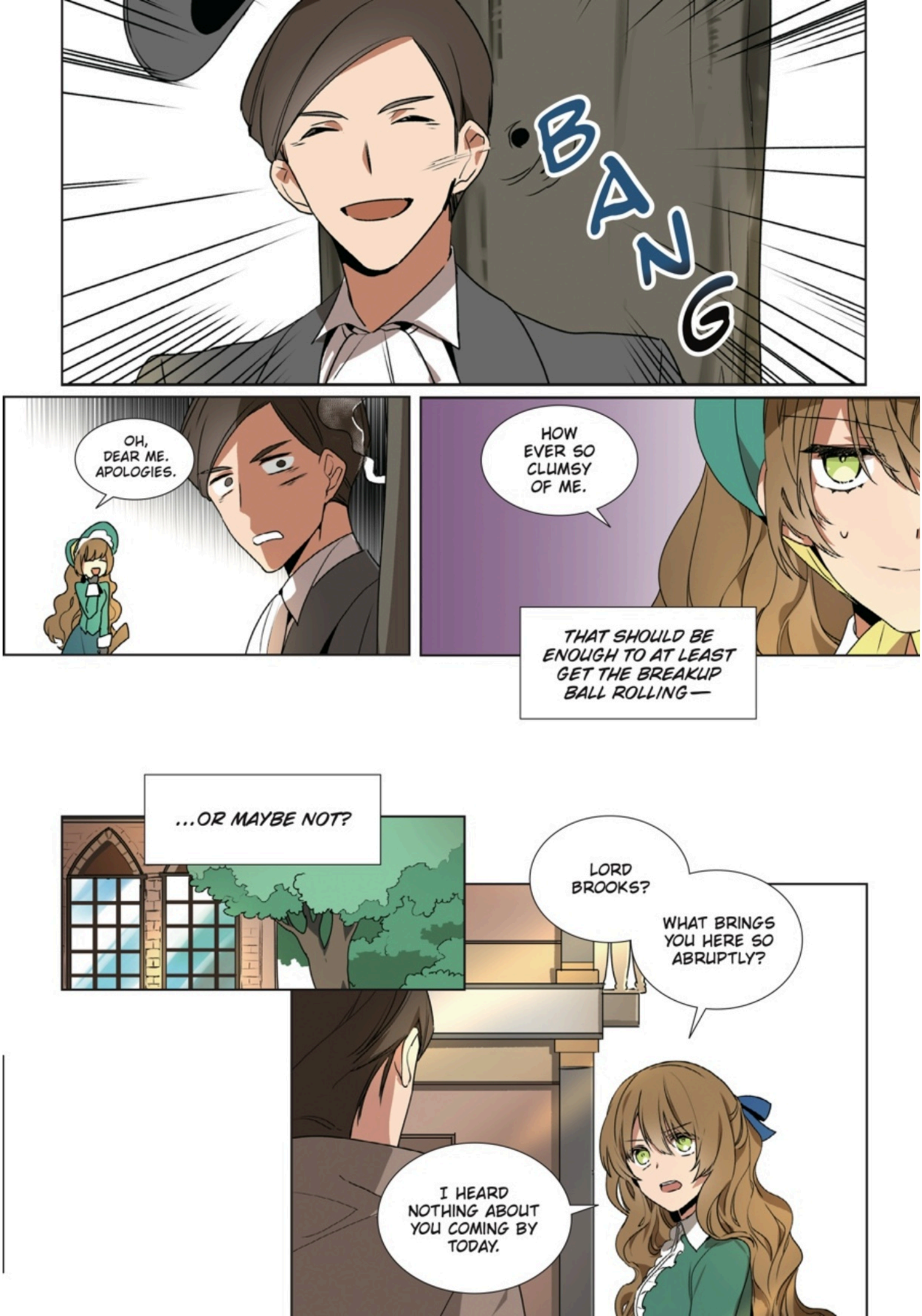
FRANCIS BROOKS, YOU IDIOT. RAELIANA'S FATHER IS AN AVID HUNTSMAN.

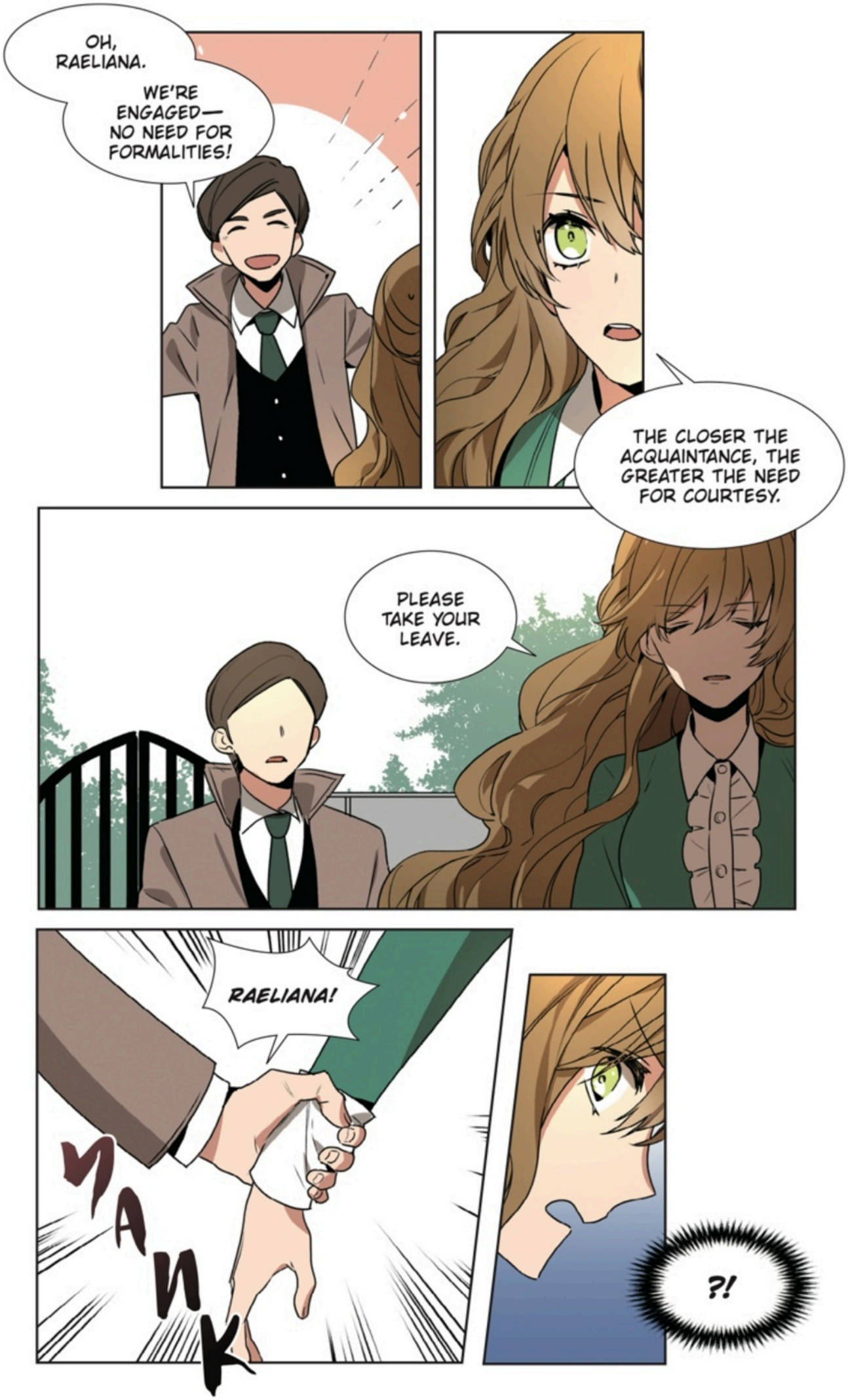


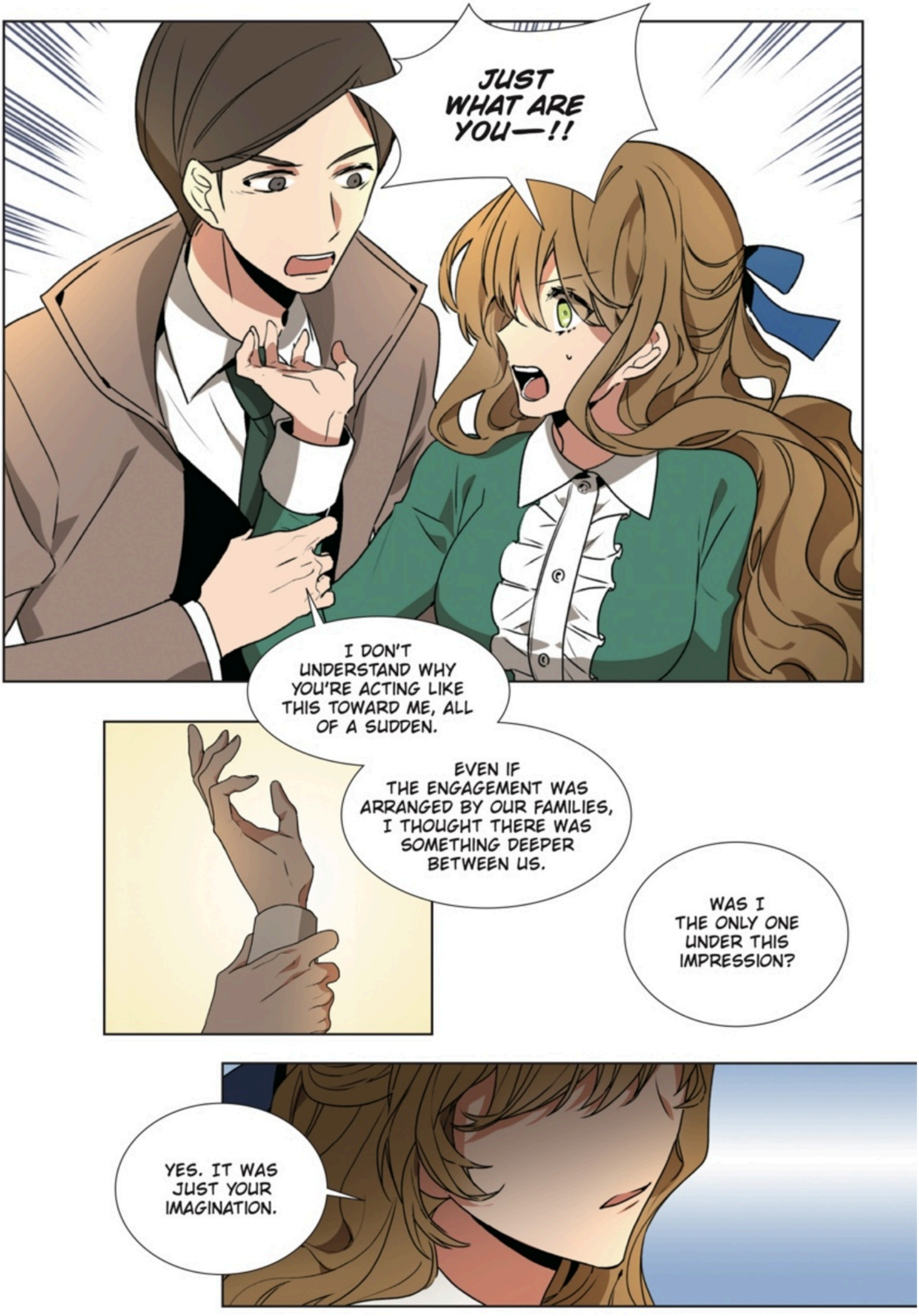
AND RAELIANA HAS TAGGED ALONG AT HIS SIDE EVER SINCE SHE COULD WALK.

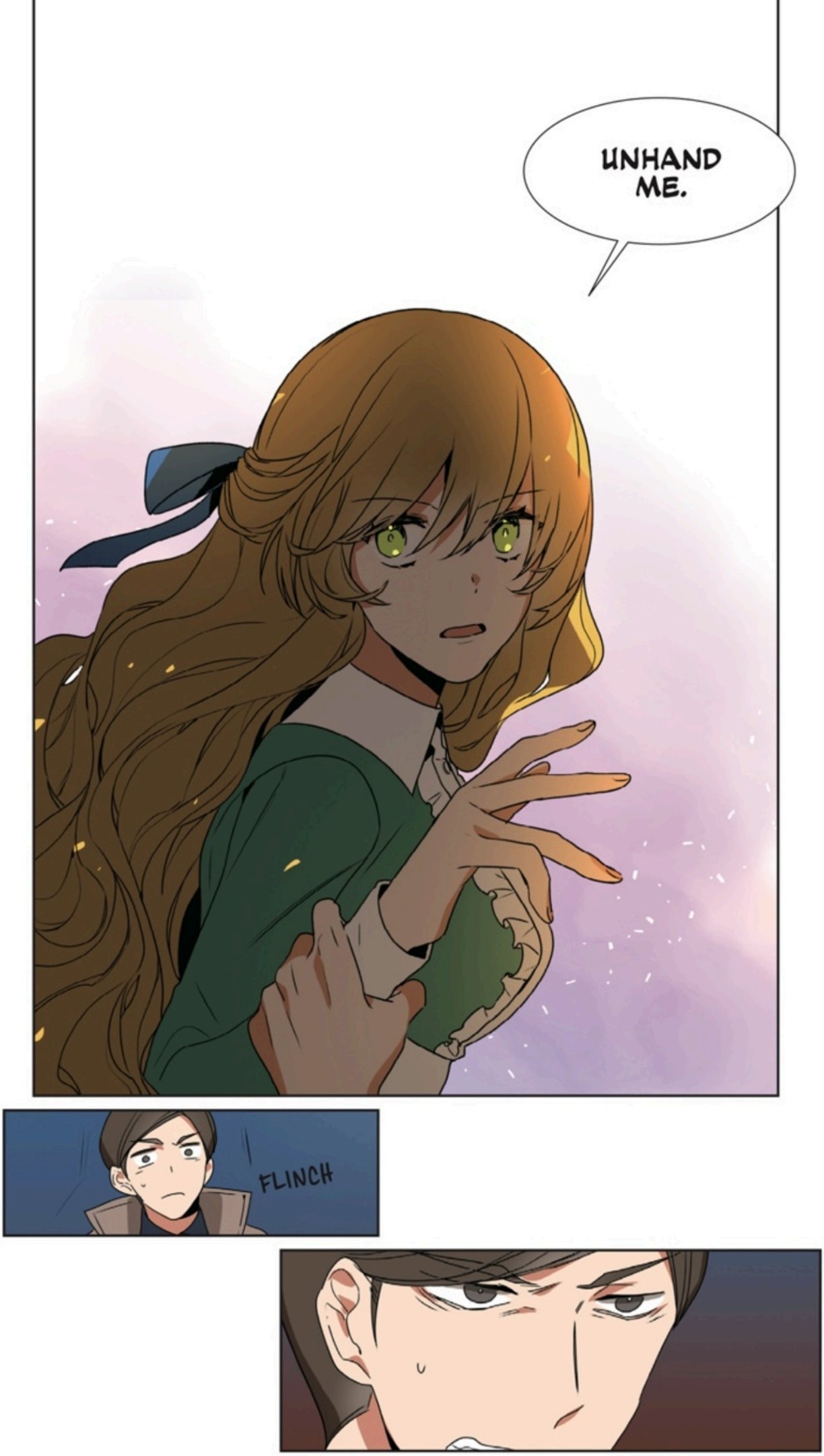


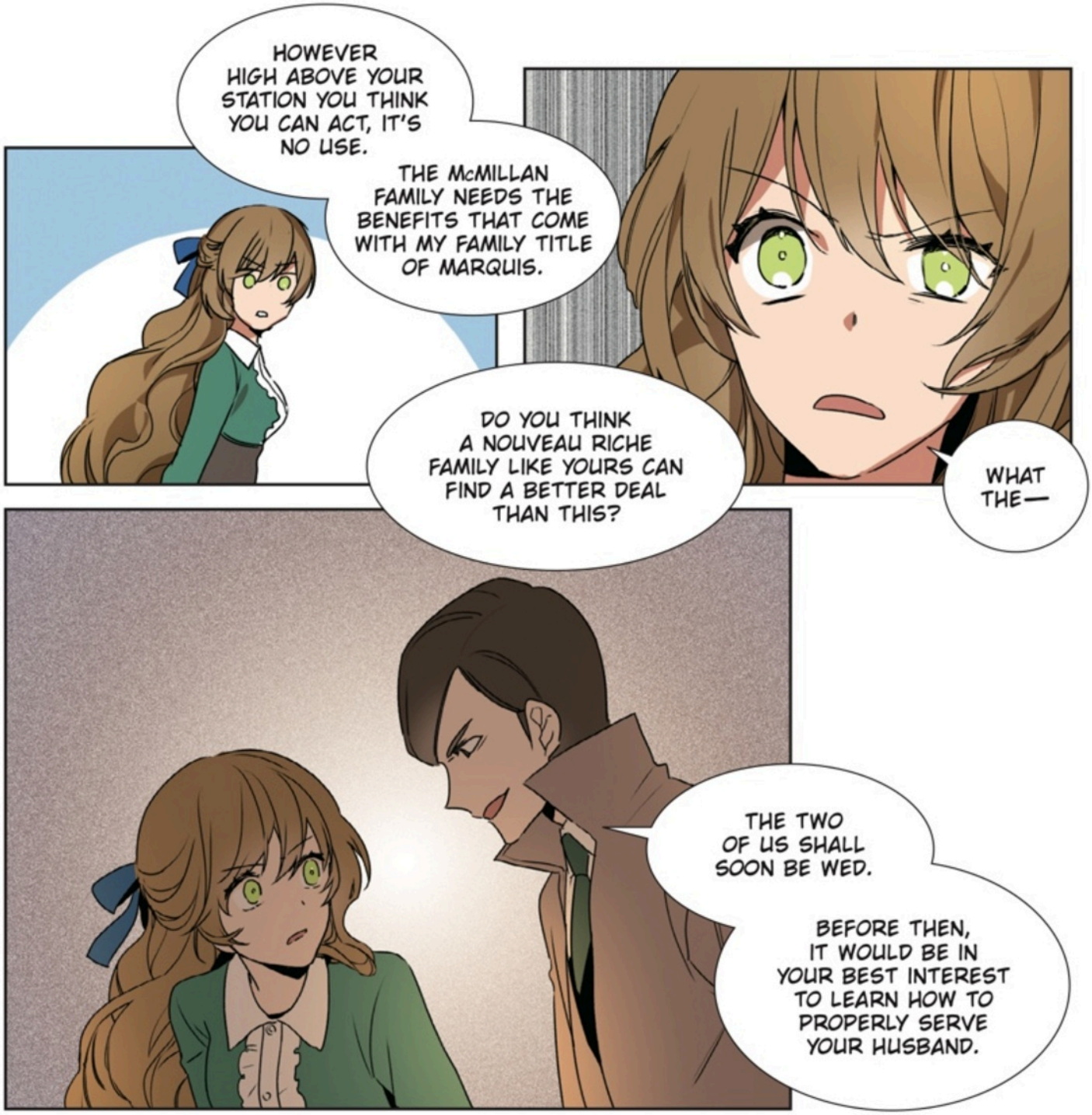
YOUR SORRY SKILLS CAN'T EVEN COMPARE.


BANG
OH, DEAR ME. APOLOGIES.
HOW EVER SO CLUMSY OF ME.
THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO AT LEAST GET THE BREAKUP BALL ROLLING—
...OR MAYBE NOT?
LORD BROOKS?
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE SO ABRUPTLY?
I HEARD NOTHING ABOUT YOU COMING BY TODAY.


OH, RAELIANA.
WE'RE ENGAGED— NO NEED FOR FORMALITIES!
THE CLOSER THE ACQUAINTANCE, THE GREATER THE NEED FOR COURTESY.
PLEASE TAKE YOUR LEAVE.
RAELIANA!
YANK
?!


JUST WHAT ARE YOU—!!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE ACTING LIKE THIS TOWARD ME, ALL OF A SUDDEN.
EVEN IF THE ENGAGEMENT WAS ARRANGED BY OUR FAMILIES, I THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING DEEPER BETWEEN US.
WAS I THE ONLY ONE UNDER THIS IMPRESSION?
YES. IT WAS JUST YOUR IMAGINATION.


UNHAND ME.
FLINCH

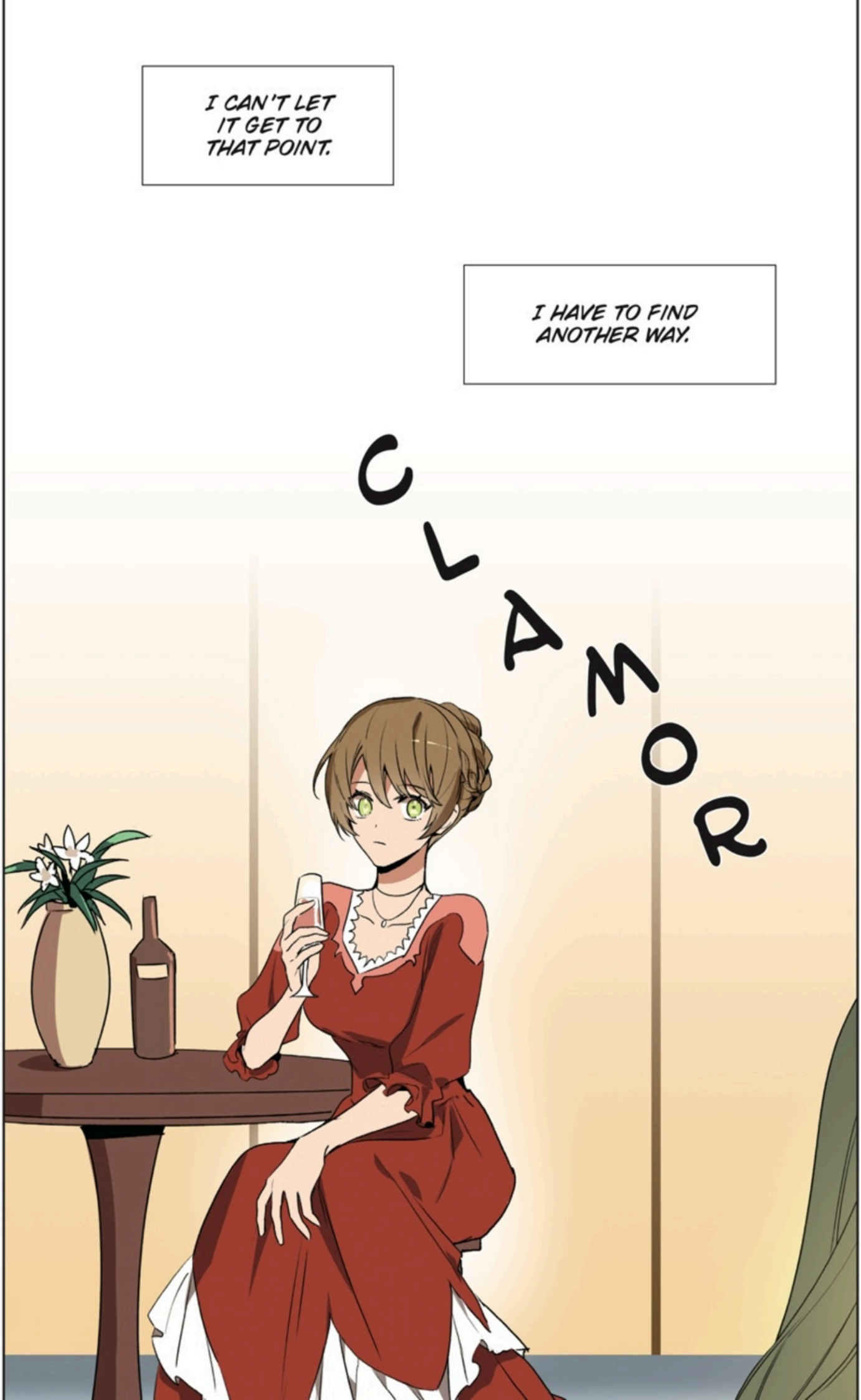

HOWEVER HIGH ABOVE YOUR STATION YOU THINK YOU CAN ACT, IT'S NO USE.
THE McMILLAN FAMILY NEEDS THE BENEFITS THAT COME WITH MY FAMILY TITLE OF MARQUIS.
DO YOU THINK A NOUVEAU RICHE FAMILY LIKE YOURS CAN FIND A BETTER DEAL THAN THIS?
WHAT THE—
THE TWO OF US SHALL SOON BE WED.
BEFORE THEN, IT WOULD BE IN YOUR BEST INTEREST TO LEARN HOW TO PROPERLY SERVE YOUR HUSBAND.

I WISH FRANCIS BROOKS...

...WOULD DROP DEAD RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

I MAY STILL HAVE SOME ALTERNATE COURSES OF ACTION AFTER WE GET MARRIED, BUT...

...HAVING TO ESCAPE FROM ALL KINDS OF DANGER IN A STRANGE AND UNKNOWN PLACE?


I CAN'T LET IT GET TO THAT POINT.
I HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY.
CLAMOR

OH...
...HE CAME.
NOAH VOLTAIRE WYNKNIGHT.
HE'S A DUKE, HERE IN THIS KINGDOM...

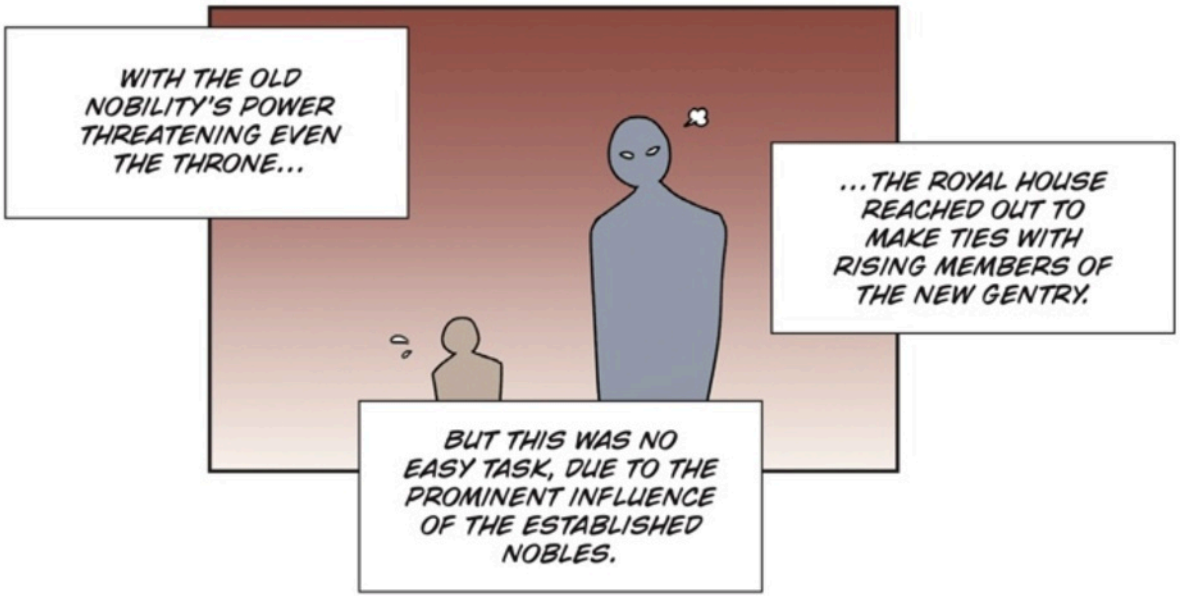
...AND THE MALE LEAD
IN THE NOVEL.

THE WORLD OF THE BOOK I FOUND MYSELF IN IS CALLED THE KINGDOM OF CHAMUS.

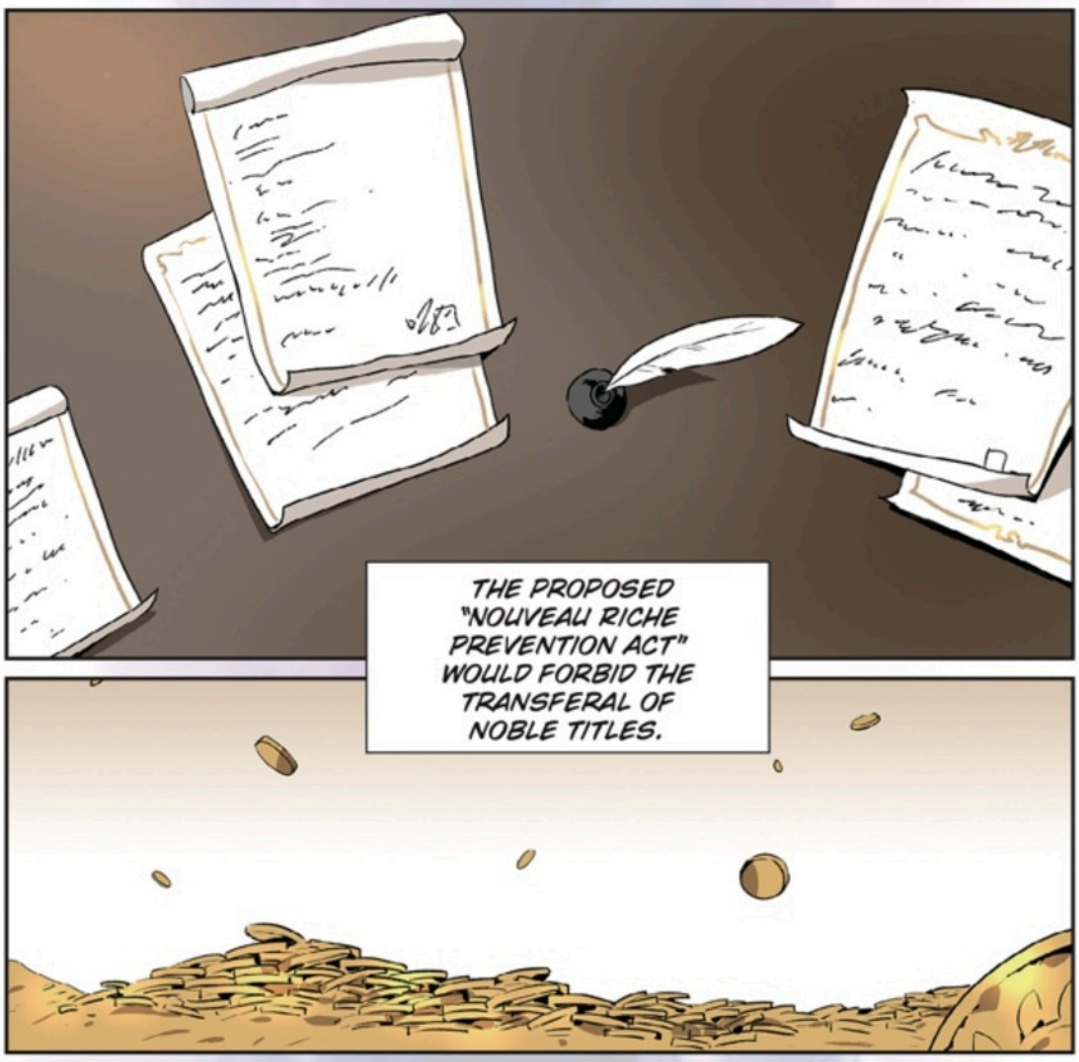
ROYAL SOVEREIGNTY IS GRADUALLY BEING DIMINISHED HERE, DUE TO MANY VARIABLES. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT, EMERGING PHILOSOPHERS, DEPRAVITY IN THE CHURCH, AND CAPITALISTIC FORCES, TO NAME A FEW.

AMID THAT BACKDROP, A NEW CLASS OF MONIED PEOPLE ABLE TO BUY NOBLE TITLES— THE NOUVEAU RICHE—IS GROWING IN POWER.

CLASHES OVER CONFLICTING INTERESTS ARE INCREASING BETWEEN THESE NEWCOMERS AND THE OLD ARISTOCRACY.



NOW, THOSE WITH OLD MONEY HAVE PUT FORTH A BILL DESIGNED TO NIP IN THE BUD THE EXPANDING POWER OF THE NEW RICH.

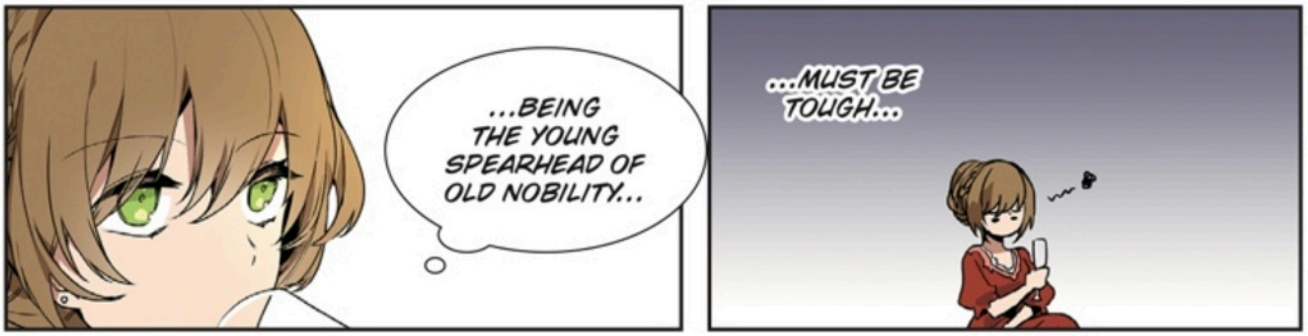


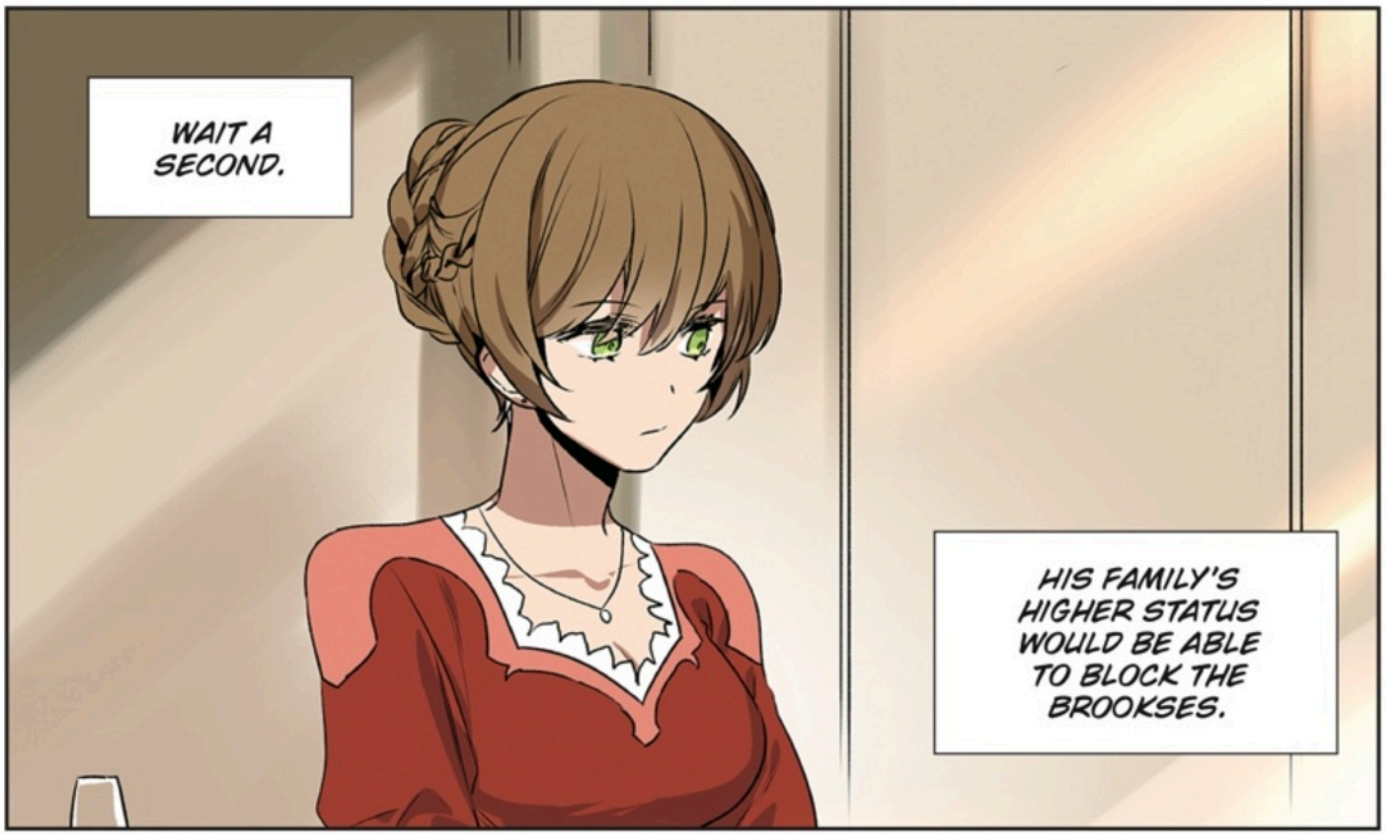
BUT THE ROYAL SEAL, A REQUISITE FOR ANY BILL TO BE SIGNED INTO LAW, HAS DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE.

AS THE OLD ARISTOCRATS BEGAN TO SPEAK OF FINDING A NEW APPROACH TO THEIR PROBLEMS...

...A MAN DROPPED ONTO THE SCENE LIKE A METEORITE.

NOAH VOLTAIRE WYNKNIGHT.
AS THE SITTING KING'S YOUNGER BROTHER, HE IS FIRST IN LINE TO THE THRONE.
THE FORMER QUEEN WAS FROM THE HOUSE OF WYNKNIGHT—A FOUNDING CLAN OF THE NATION AND THE AXLE ABOUT WHICH ITS MILITARY POWER HAS REVOLVED FOR GENERATIONS.
NOAH IS THE FIRST SON OF SAID QUEEN.
HE'S LIKE THE FINAL BOSS OF THE CONSERVATIVE FACTION.
AFTER STEPPING BACK FROM THE CONTEST FOR THE THRONE DUE TO AN UNFORTUNATE "SCANDAL"...
...NOAH HAS REEMERGED AS HEAD OF THE WYNKNIGHT FAMILY, DEFTLY DISCERNING THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE ESTABLISHED ARISTOCRACY.


...BEING THE YOUNG SPEARHEAD OF OLD NOBILITY...
...MUST BE TOUGH...


WAIT A SECOND.
HIS FAMILY'S HIGHER STATUS WOULD BE ABLE TO BLOCK THE BROOKSES.

SOUNDS LIKE I SHOULD MAKE A DEAL WITH...

...THIS MAN WHO HOLDS A TRUMP CARD IN HIS HANDS.

I KNOW THE ENDING OF THIS NOVEL, AS WELL AS NOAH'S FUTURE.

IT'S SOMETHING ONLY I CAN BRING TO THE TABLE, AS SOMEONE FROM OUTSIDE THIS WORLD.

I DON'T KNOW IF IT WOULD WORK ON HIM, DIE-HARD ARISTOCRAT THAT HE IS. BUT STILL...

PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT.

I HAVE TO TRY.
IT'S AT LEAST WORTH A SHOT.
WELL, WOULDJA LOOK WHO IT IS? BROOKS!
FRANCIS BROOKS!
JAKE LANGSTON...
LONG TIME NO SEE, BROOKS.
...I HEARD YOUR INSPECTION WAS BEING HELD UP, ON ACCOUNT OF A SMUGGLER.
WHUMP
A LITTLE THING LIKE THAT SURELY CAN BE RESOLVED WITHOUT ME!

NOTHING TO DO BUT CUT THE HEAD OFF SOME CROOK.
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
PARDON US! JUST A MOMENT, PLEASE...
DIDJA LEAVE THAT CUTE FIANCÉE OF YOURS SOMEWHERE AND COME HERE ALONE?
THAT'S...
...SOMETHING YOU NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT.
BUT OF COURSE I'D WORRY.
WE'RE IN THE SAME BOAT, AFTER ALL.
EVERYTHING IS GOING FINE, SO JUST—

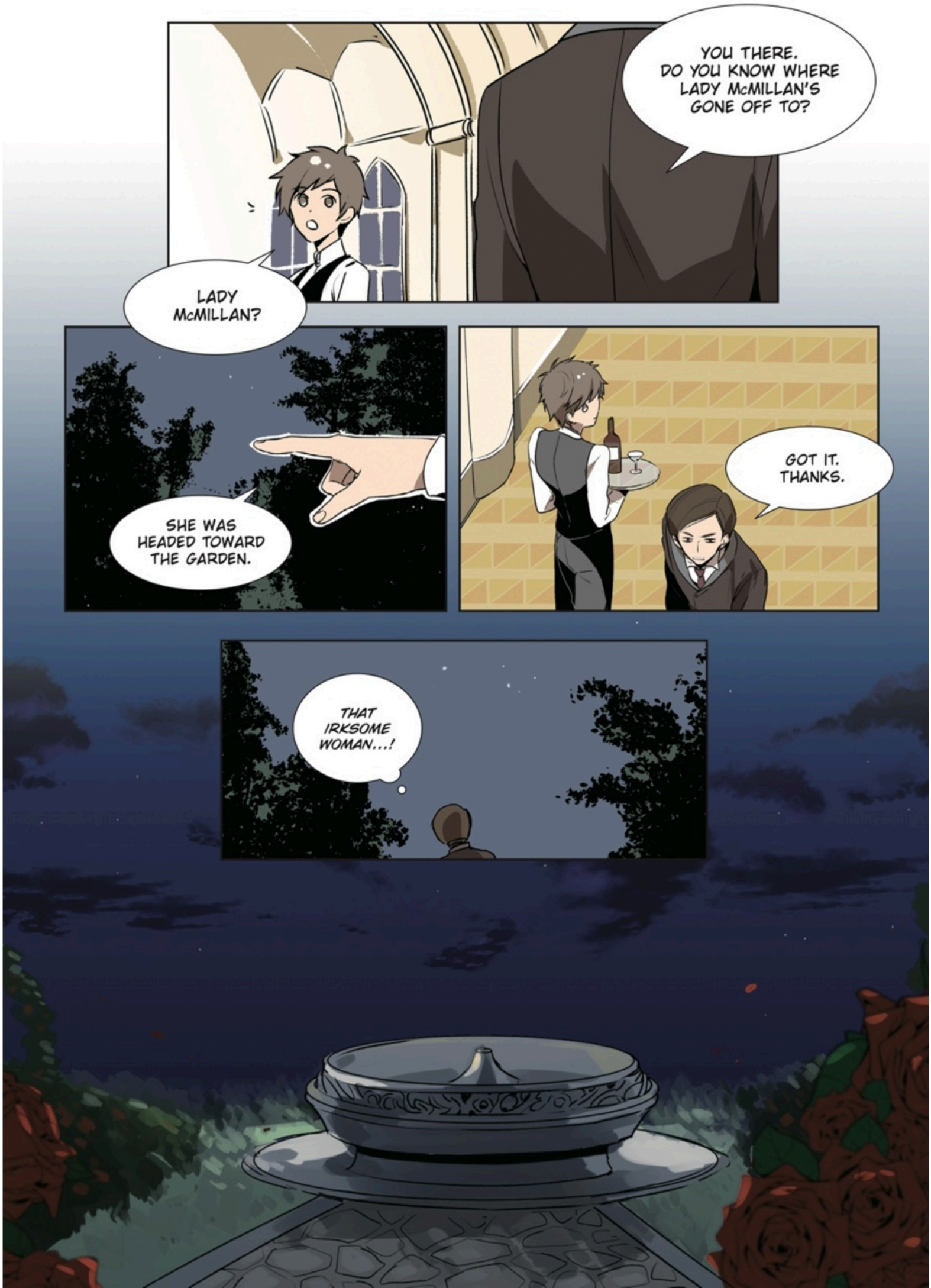
OUR CLIENT IS ALSO CONCERNED.
FLINCH
THERE'S LOTSA RUMORS FLYING ABOUT THAT YOU LOVEBIRDS AREN'T GETTING ALONG, YA KNOW?

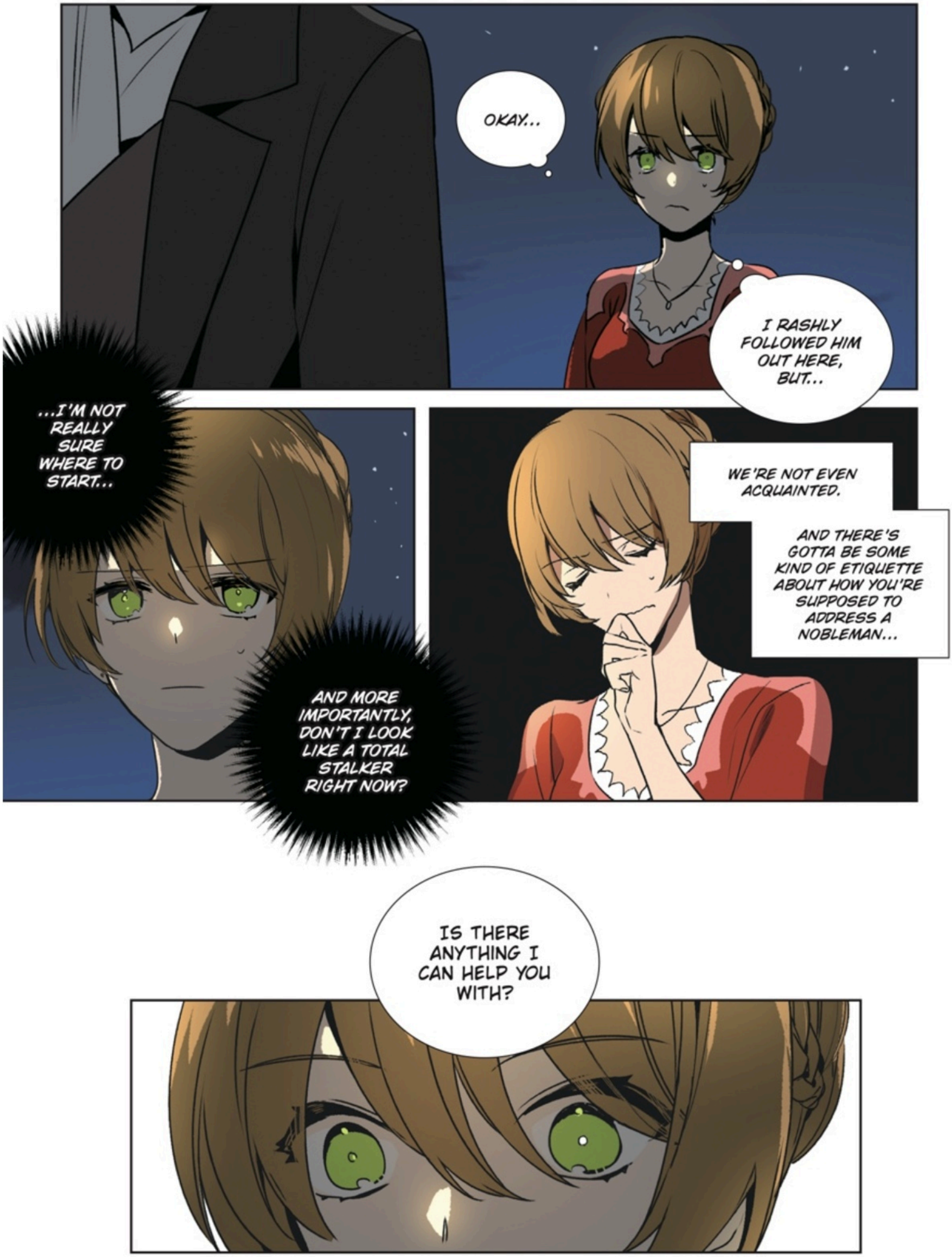
GLANCE

LEAN
I'M SAYING THIS ON BEHALF OF MY SIBLING, SO LISTEN UP.

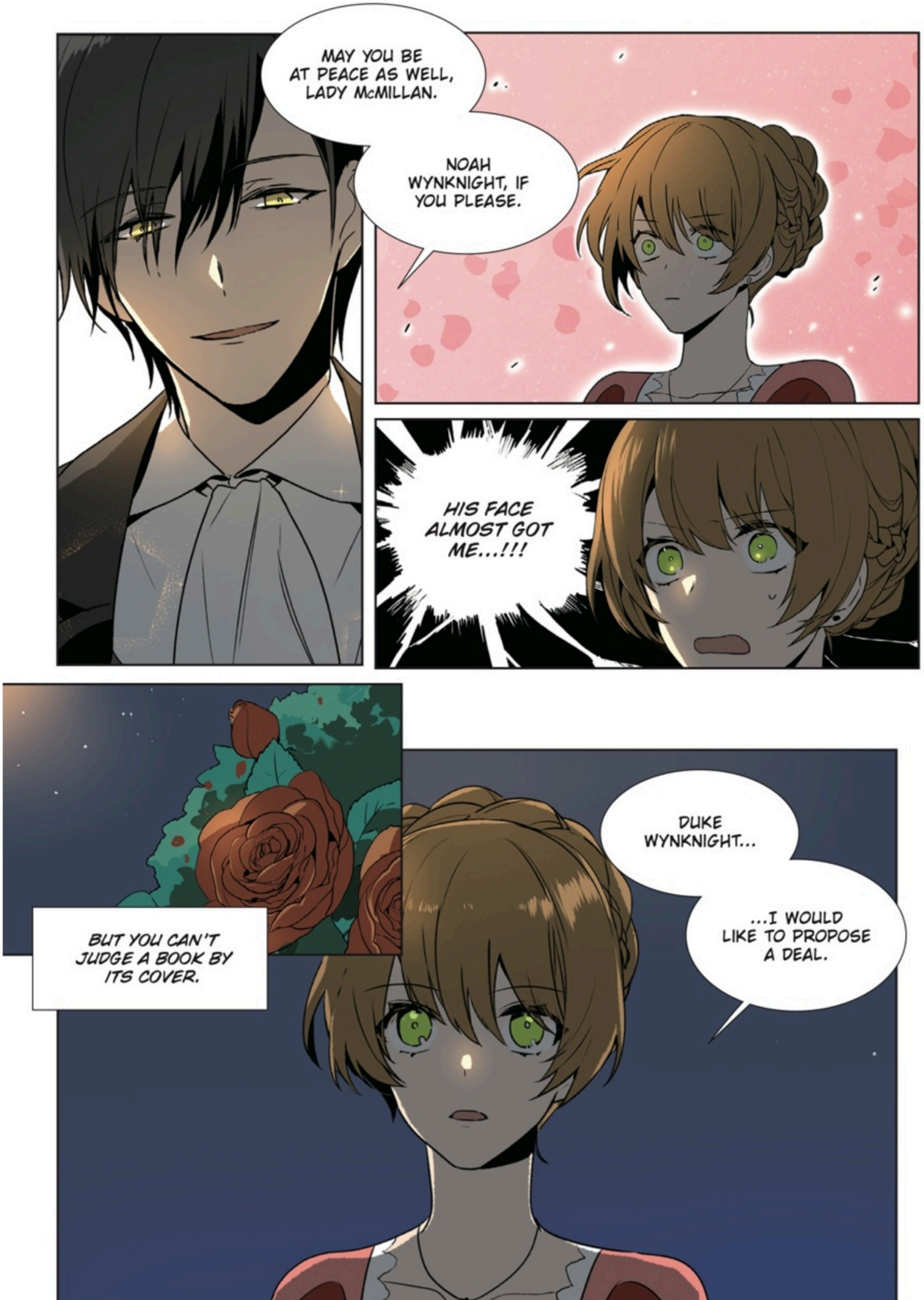
DO YOUR JOB AND DO IT RIGHT, YOU PIECE OF TRASH. OR YOU'RE DONE FOR.
UNDERSTOOD?

I UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY WELL, AND I'LL HANDLE IT. SO GET LOST.
OKAY, SURE THING.
JUST PAY YOUR FIANCÉE A LITTLE MORE MIND, IS ALL.
KEEP HER FROM GETTING ANY STRANGE IDEAS.
THIS IS ALL THAT WOMAN'S FAULT...!
WE'RE ENGAGED— SHE SHOULD SHOW SOME OBEDIENCE!
IT'S AS IF THE MEEK WOMAN SHE WAS HAS SUDDENLY BEEN REPLACED BY SOMEONE ELSE ENTIRELY...


YOU THERE. DO YOU KNOW WHERE LADY McMILLAN'S GONE OFF TO?
LADY McMILLAN?
SHE WAS HEADED TOWARD THE GARDEN.
GOT IT. THANKS.
THAT IRKSOME WOMAN...!


OKAY...
I RASHLY FOLLOWED HIM OUT HERE, BUT...
...I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHERE TO START...
WE'RE NOT EVEN ACQUAINTED.
AND THERE'S GOTTA BE SOME KIND OF ETIQUETTE ABOUT HOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO ADDRESS A NOBLEMAN...
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, DON'T I LOOK LIKE A TOTAL STALKER RIGHT NOW?
IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH?

DUKE WYNKNIGHT, MAY YOU FIND PEACE IN THE GRACE OF THE GODDESS.
I AM RAELIANA McMILLAN, DAUGHTER OF BARON JOHNDEIN McMILLAN.


MAY YOU BE AT PEACE AS WELL, LADY McMILLAN.
NOAH WYNKNIGHT, IF YOU PLEASE.
HIS FACE ALMOST GOT ME...!!!
BUT YOU CAN'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER.
DUKE WYNKNIGHT...
...I WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE A DEAL.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE REALLY LIKE.

...BUT I WISH TO DISCUSS THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL SEAL.
...BUT THE TRUTH IS, INSIDE...
HMM...
HOW VERY...

...FORTUNATE FOR ME.

...LURKS A BASTARD EVILER THAN THE DEVIL HIMSELF...

SHIVER

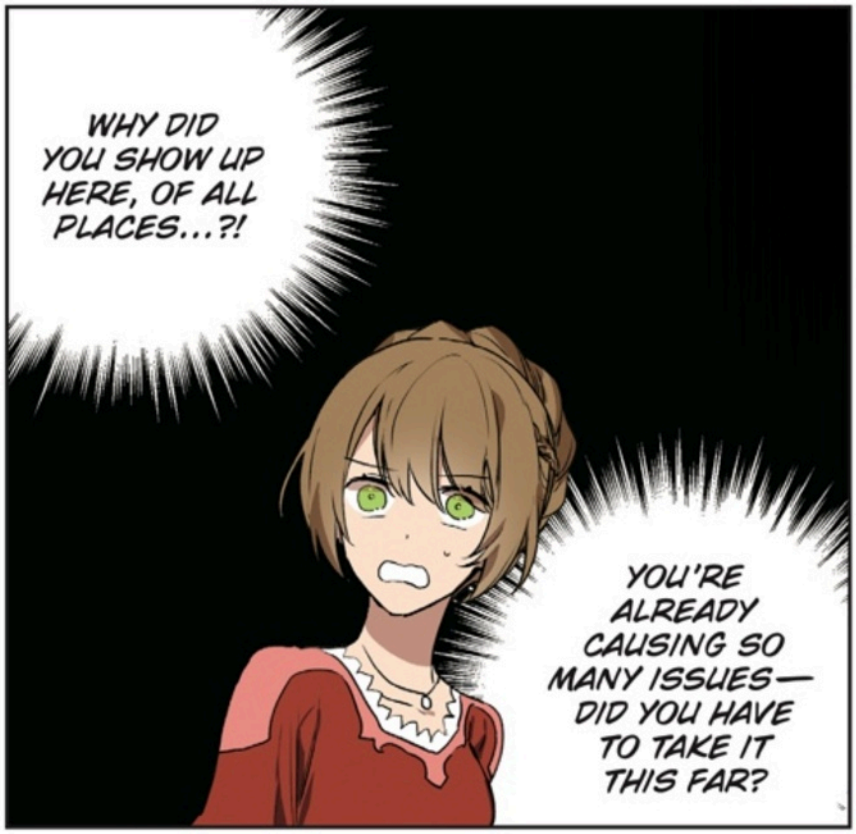
...SO TWO-FACED.

CLENCH

AND JUST WHAT KIND OF DEAL WERE YOU HOPING TO STRIKE?

Why Raeliana Ended Up at the Duke's Mansion

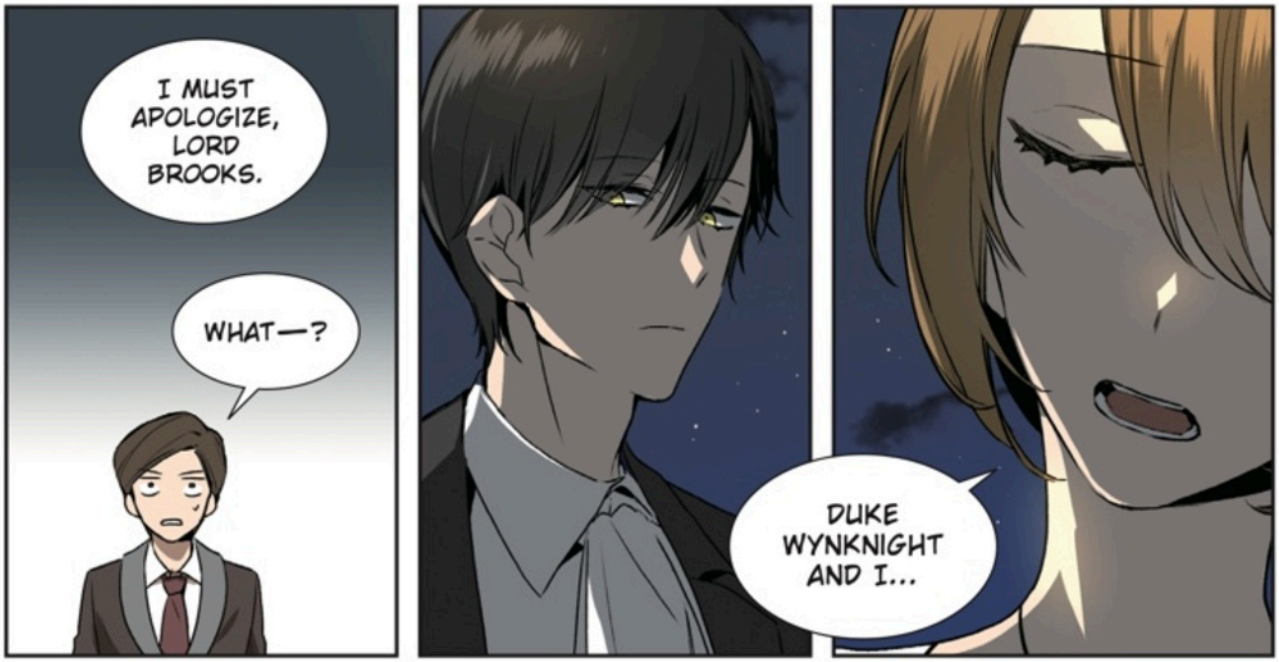
AS I'D THOUGHT... I'VE GOT A SEAT AT THE BARGAINING TABLE.
I HAVE TO TAKE CHARGE OF MY OWN FATE.
INHALE
RAELIANA?
FRANCIS BROOKS?!

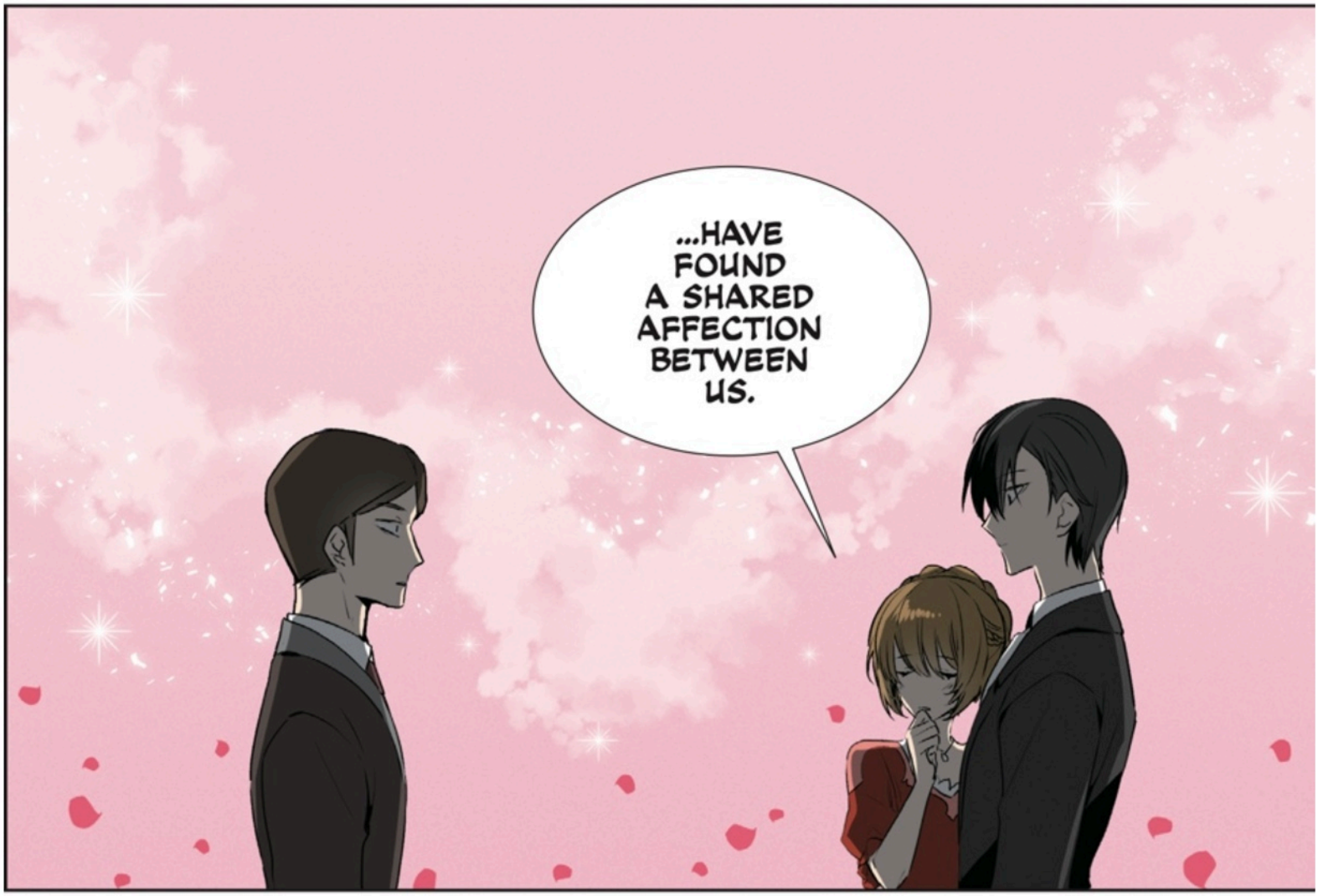

WHY DID YOU SHOW UP HERE, OF ALL PLACES...?!
YOU'RE ALREADY CAUSING SO MANY ISSUES— DID YOU HAVE TO TAKE IT THIS FAR?

SO WHAT NOW...? WILL I HAVE TO WAIT FOR ANOTHER CHANCE?

OR...

...COULD THIS BE AN OPPORTUNITY IN AND OF ITSELF?


I MUST APOLOGIZE, LORD BROOKS.
WHAT—?
DUKE WYNKNIGHT AND I...


...HAVE FOUND A SHARED AFFECTION BETWEEN US.

.....

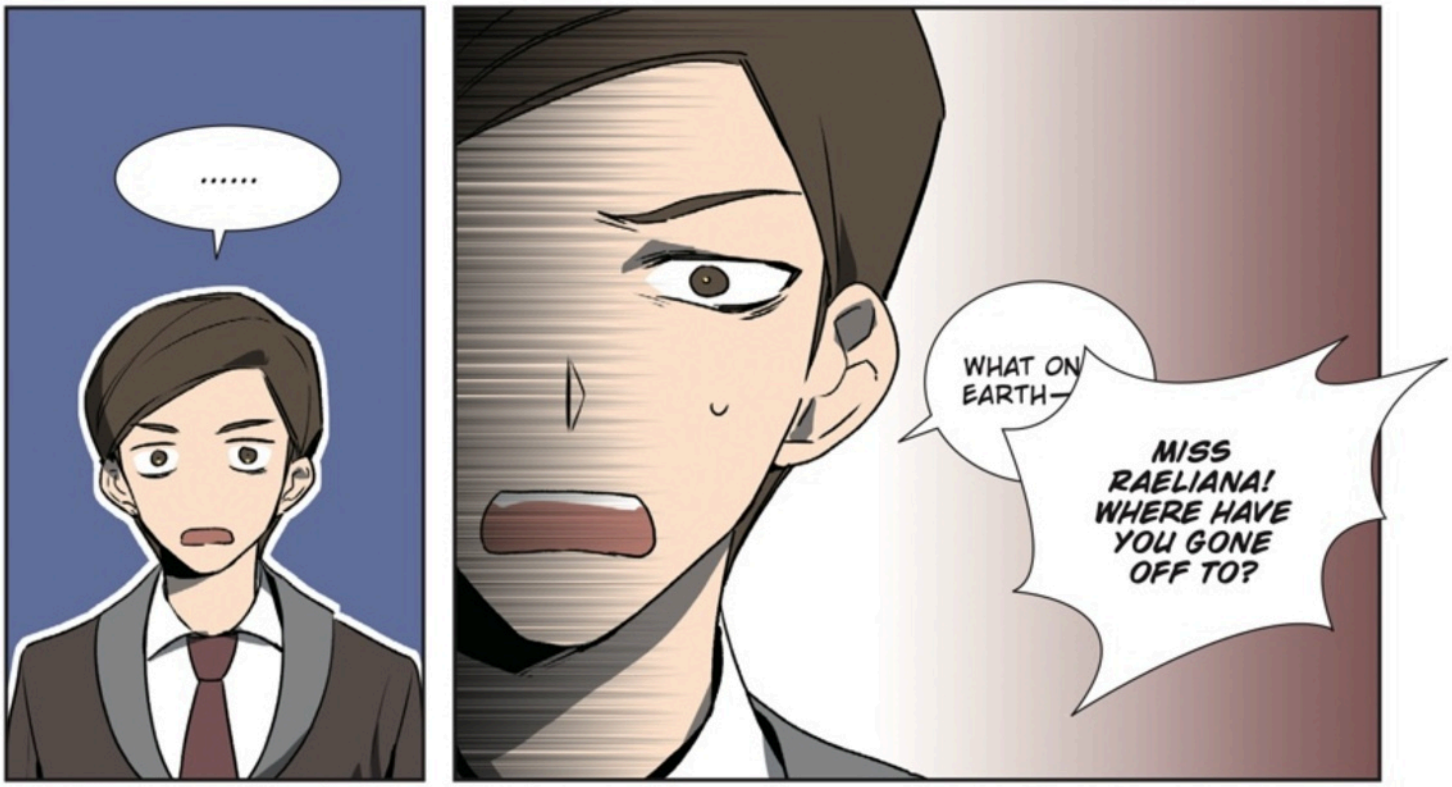
ROYAL...

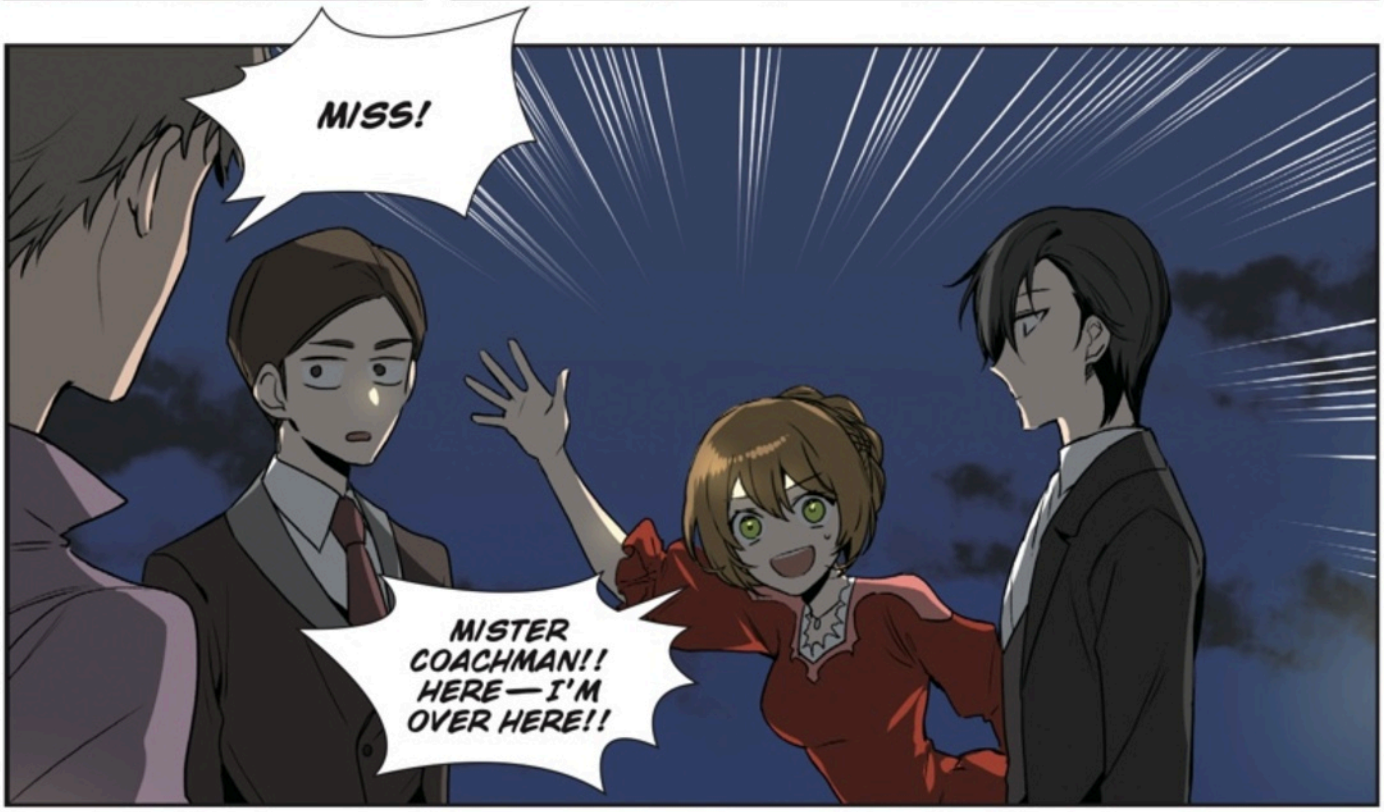
...SEAL.

HEH.

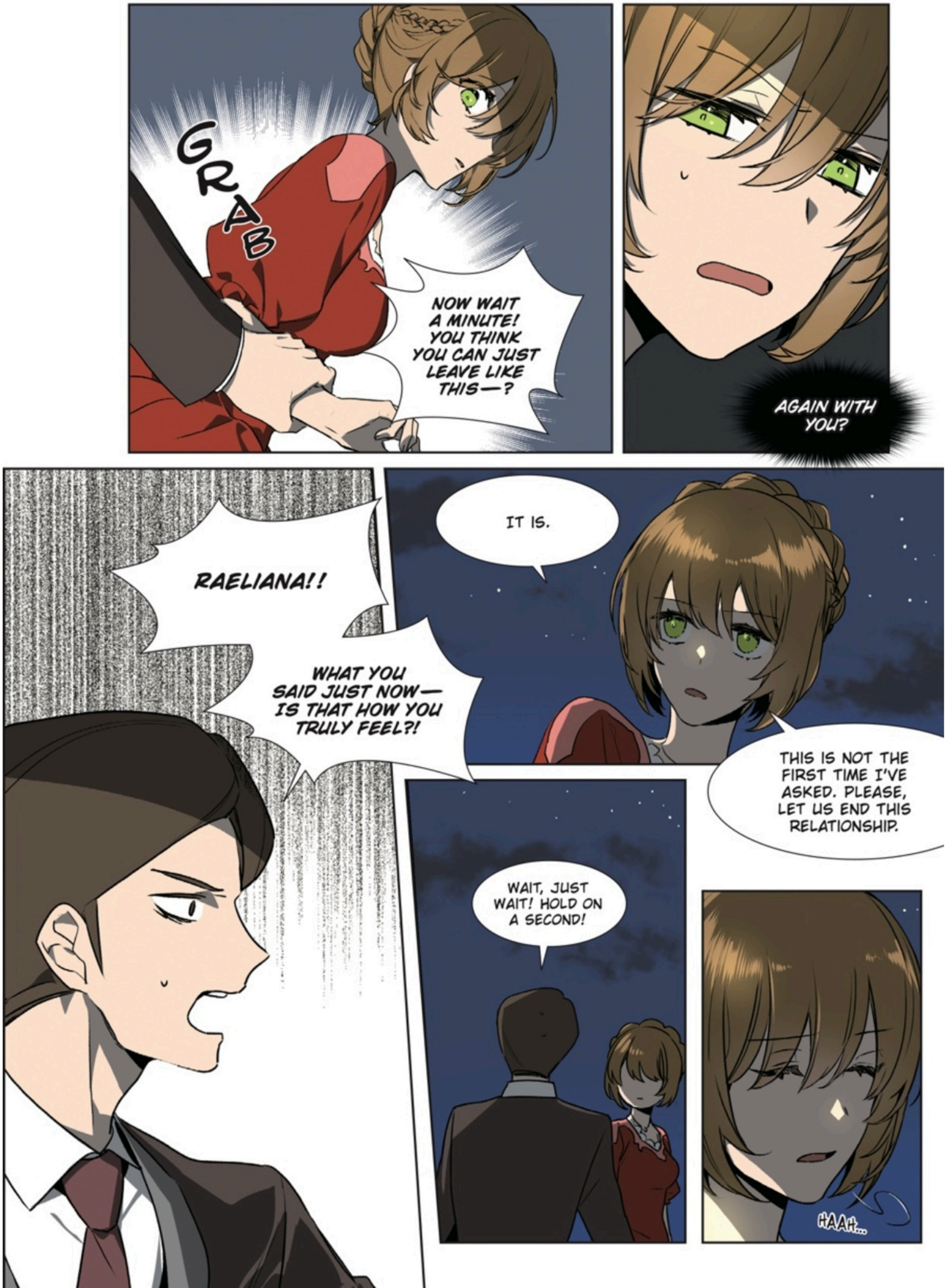
SLIDE

IT WORKED?
IT'S ACTUALLY WORKING?


.....
WHAT ON EARTH—
MISS RAELIANA! WHERE HAVE YOU GONE OFF TO?


MISS!
MISTER COACHMAN!! HERE—I'M OVER HERE!!

WELL, IT'S GETTING QUITE LATE, SO I MUST TAKE MY LEAVE. MAY YOU HAVE A PLEASANT NIGHT.
FATHER, THE CURFEW YOU SET SAVED ME... I WON'T FORGET YOUR WISDOM!


GRAB
NOW WAIT A MINUTE! YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST LEAVE LIKE THIS—?
AGAIN WITH YOU?
IT IS.
RAELIANA!!
WHAT YOU SAID JUST NOW— IS THAT HOW YOU TRULY FEEL?!
THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE ASKED. PLEASE, LET US END THIS RELATIONSHIP.
WAIT, JUST WAIT! HOLD ON A SECOND!
HAAH...

IT'S LATE. LET'S LEAVE IT AT THAT.
RAGE
THE ABSOLUTE NERVE OF YOU!!
HAVE YOU ANY SENSE OF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING RIGHT NOW?!

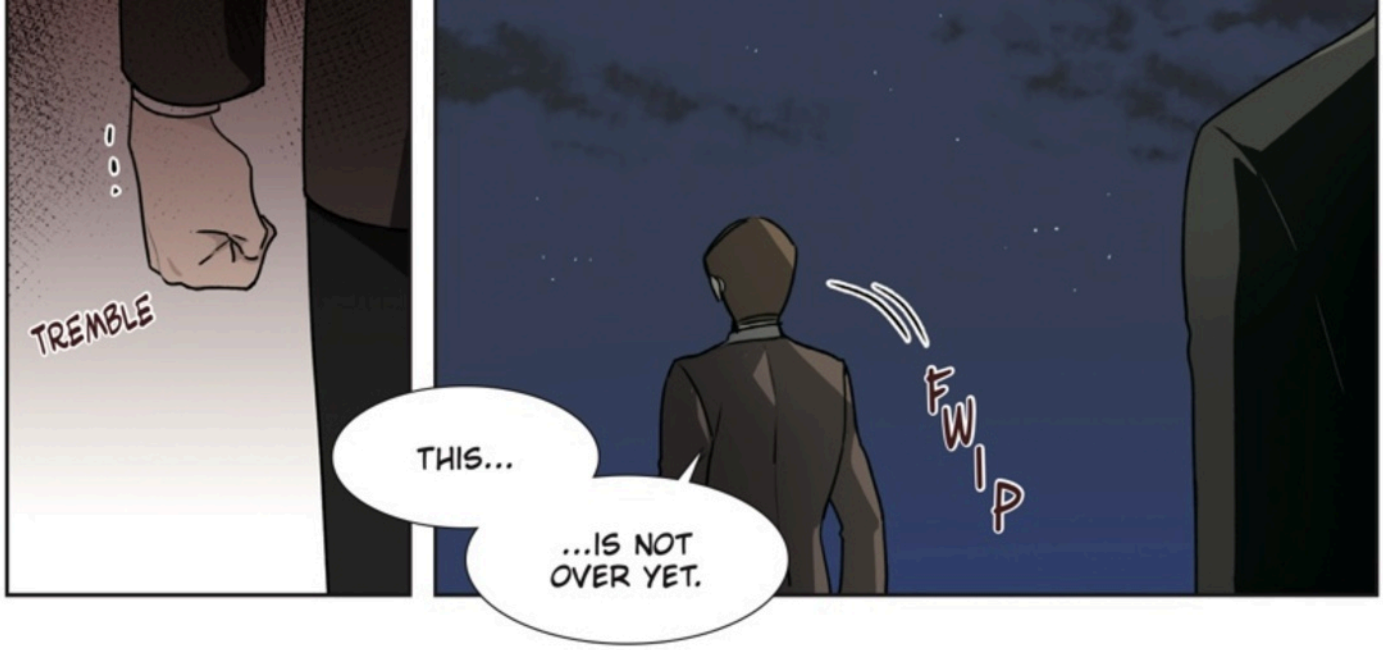
ENOUGH.
YOU OVER THERE. PLEASE SEE THE LADY HOME NOW.

YES, SIR.

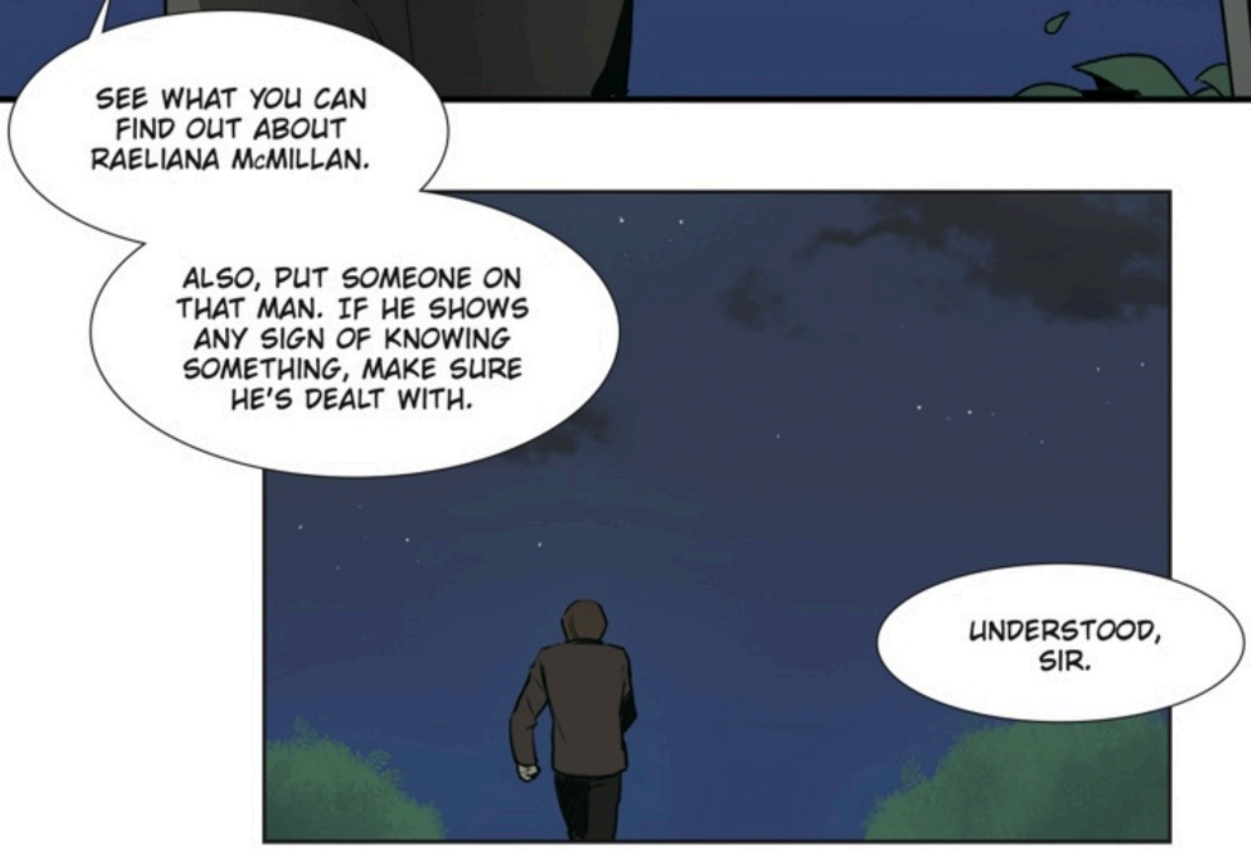
LET US BE ON OUR WAY, MISS. I WILL BE SCOLDED IF I GET YOU BACK TOO LATE.

NOT ONLY IS THERE ANOTHER MAN, BUT IT'S NOAH BLOODY WYNKNIGHT?
WHEN SHE SHOULD BE ON HER HANDS AND KNEES BEGGING FOR MY HAND IN MARRIAGE...!!
NO MATTER HOW HIGH YOUR STATUS MAY BE, YOU HAVE OVERSTEPPED YOUR BOUNDARIES.
LADY McMILLAN IS MY FIANCÉE!!
GRIN

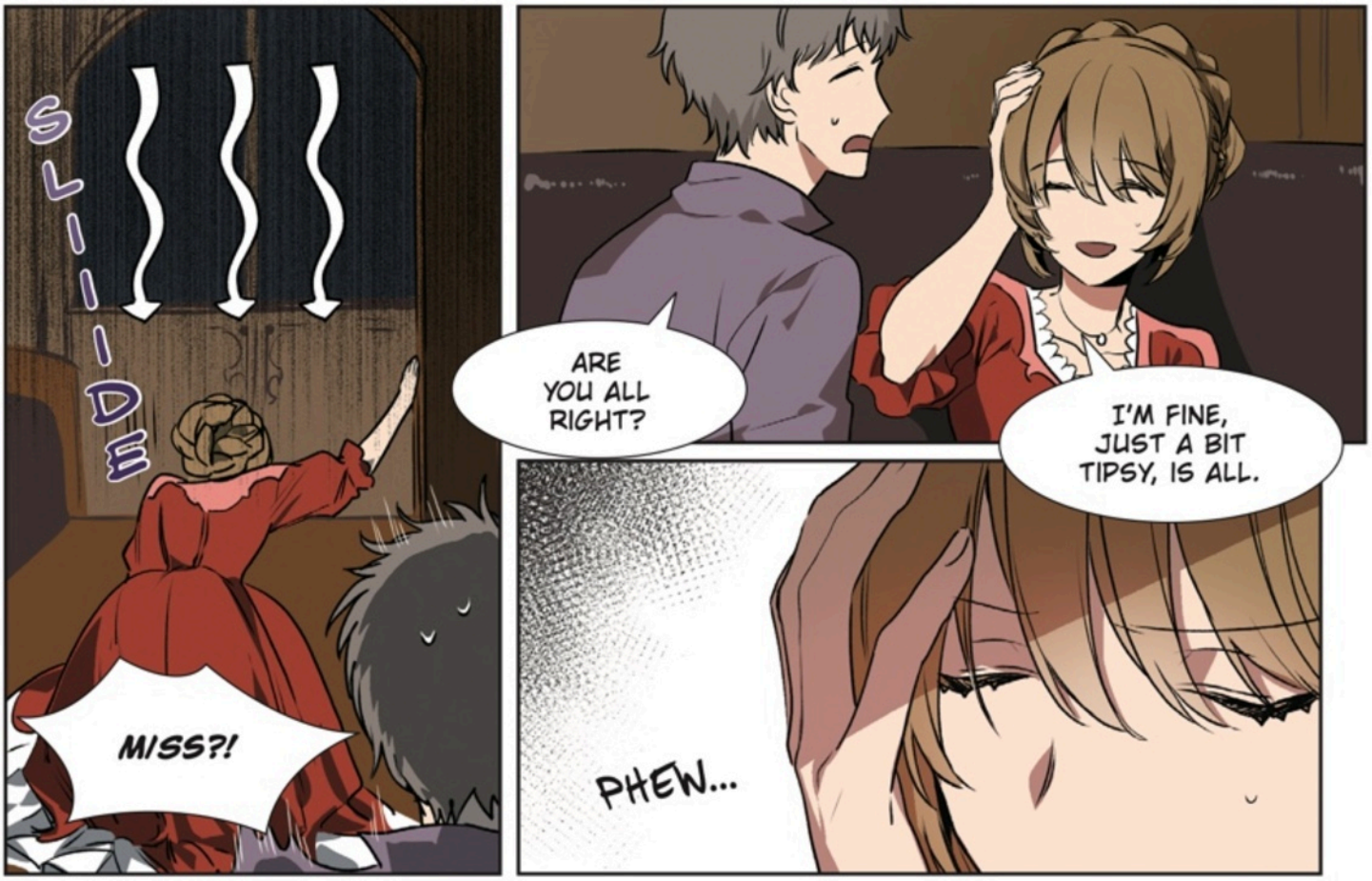
AS FOR YOU... I BELIEVE YOU ARE NO LONGER ENTITLED TO REFER TO HER AS YOUR FIANCÉE.


TREMBLE
THIS...
...IS NOT OVER YET.
FWIP

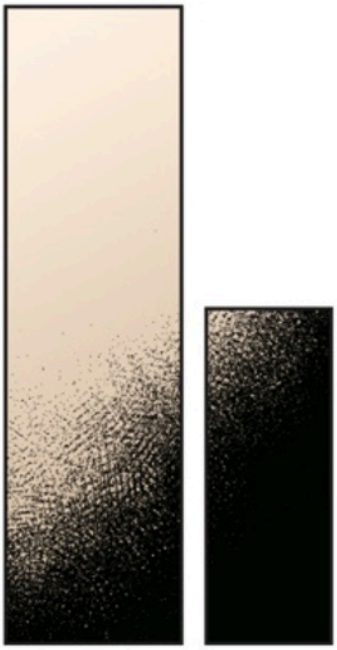
WHITTON.
SIR.
SHF

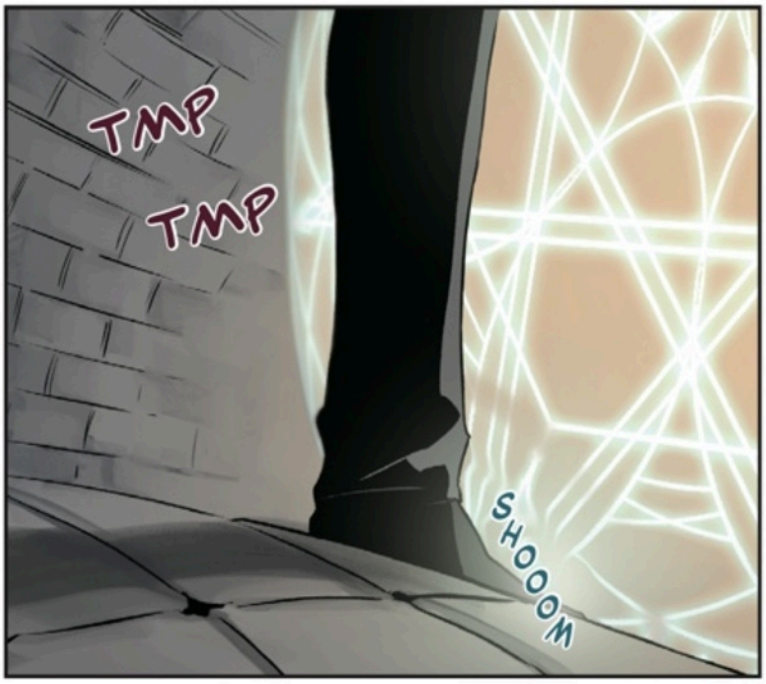

SEE WHAT YOU CAN FIND OUT ABOUT RAELIANA McMILLAN.
ALSO, PUT SOMEONE ON THAT MAN. IF HE SHOWS ANY SIGN OF KNOWING SOMETHING, MAKE SURE HE'S DEALT WITH.
UNDERSTOOD, SIR.

MAKE A DEAL?
WITH ME?



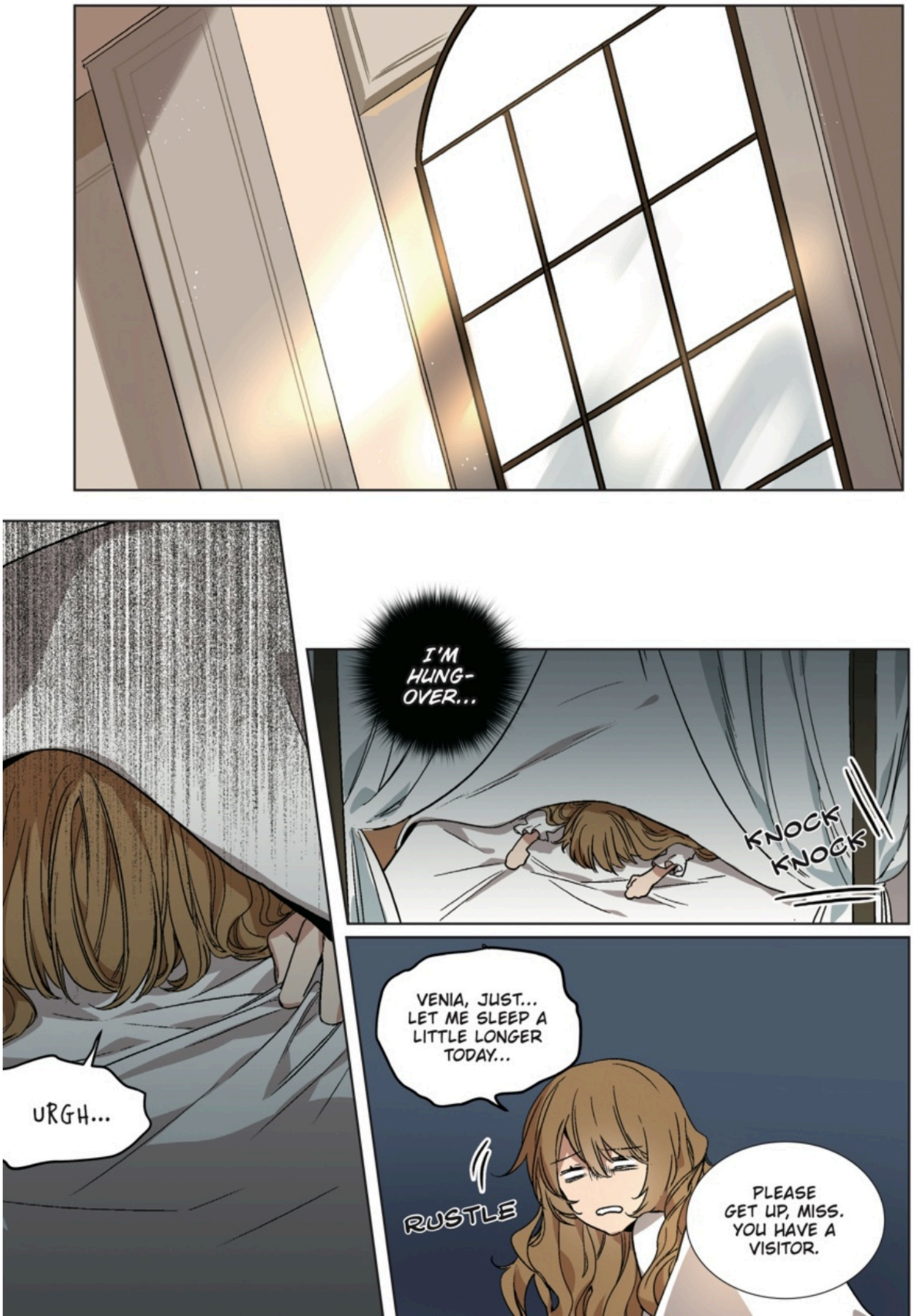
I MUST BE OUT OF MY MIND.....

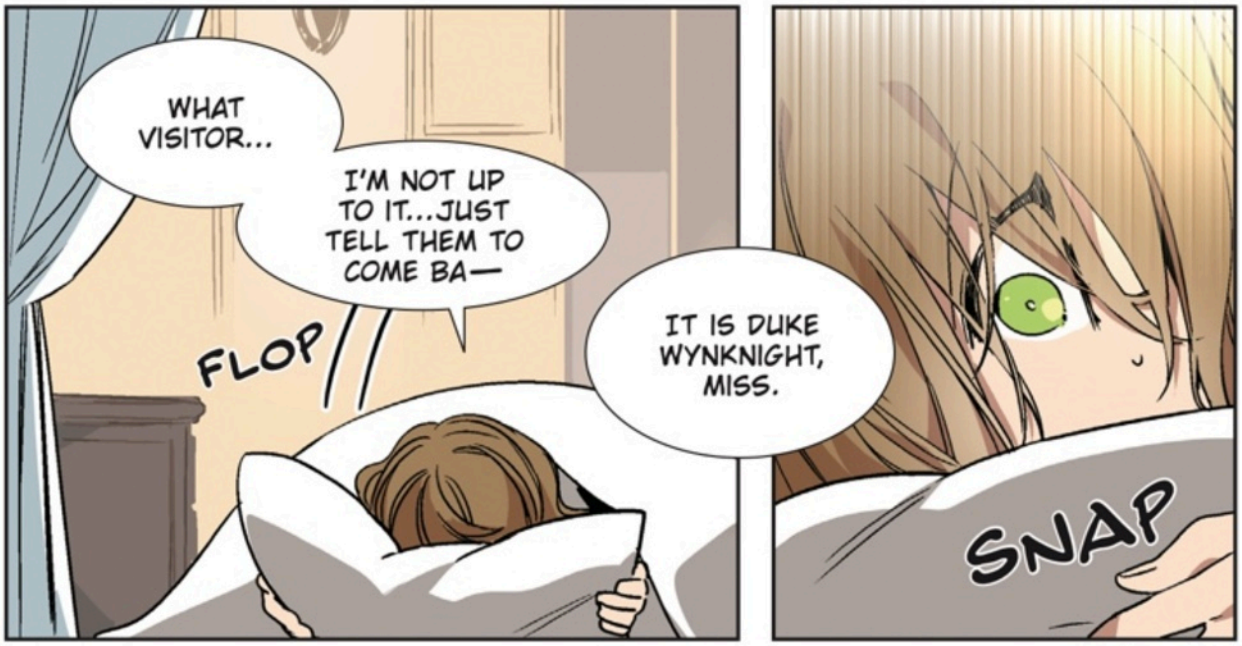


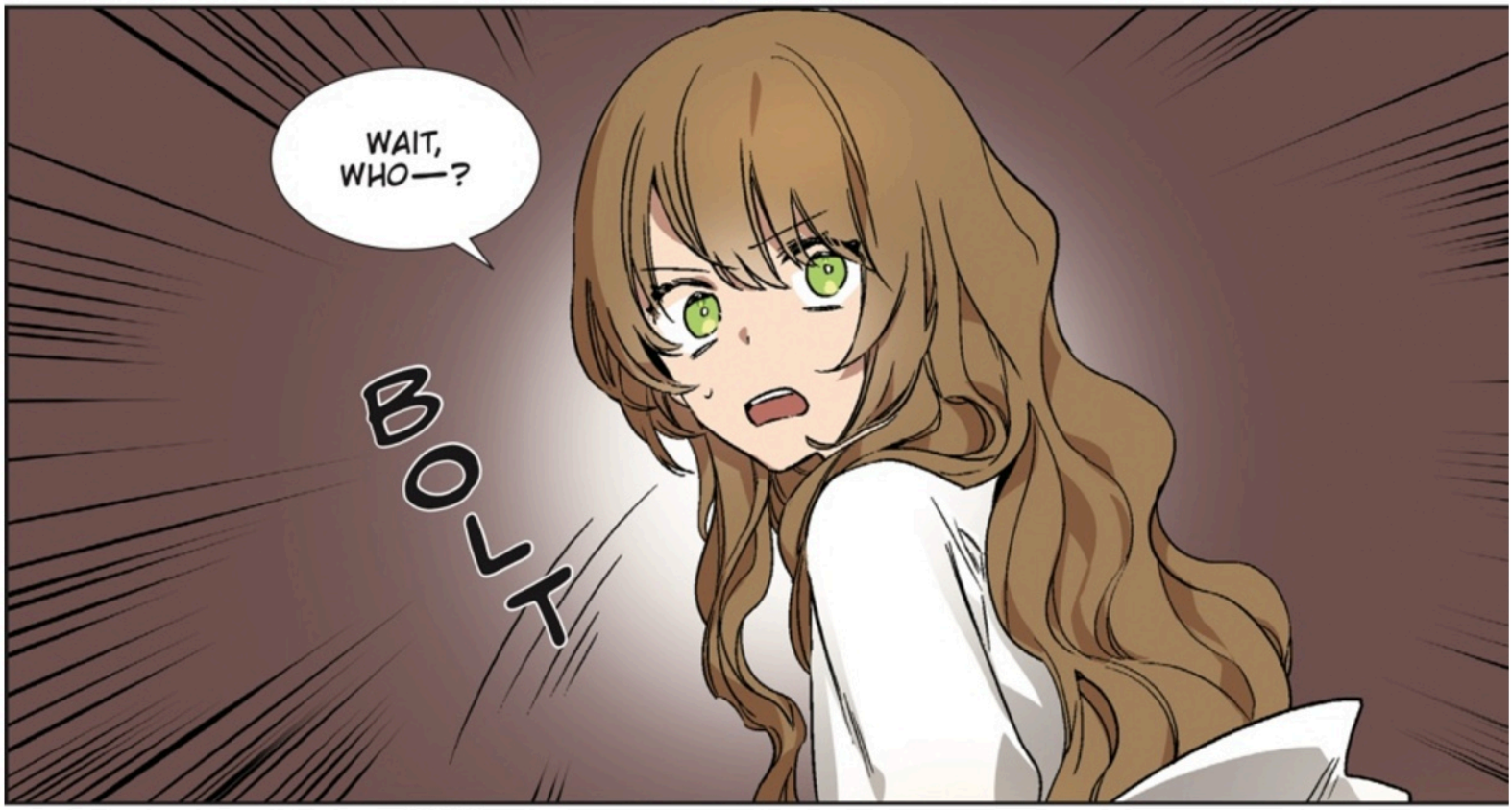


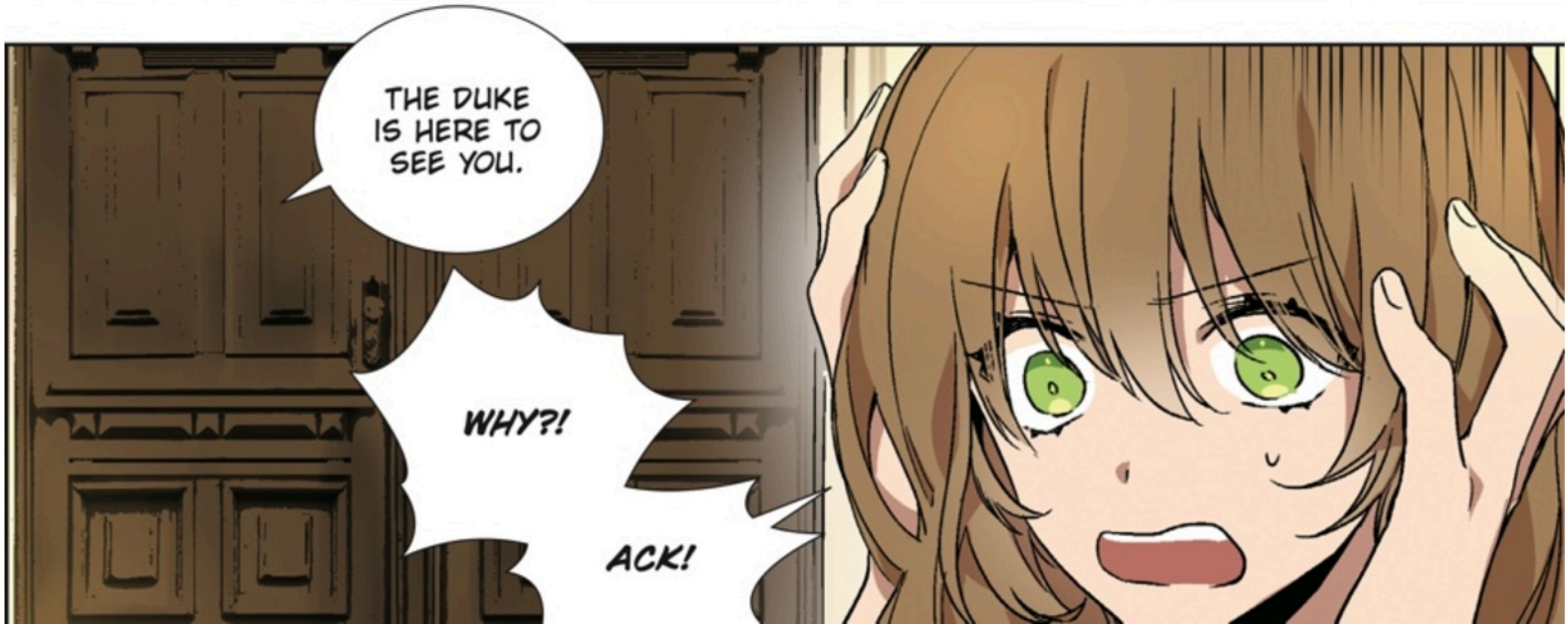
ON MY WAY HERE...

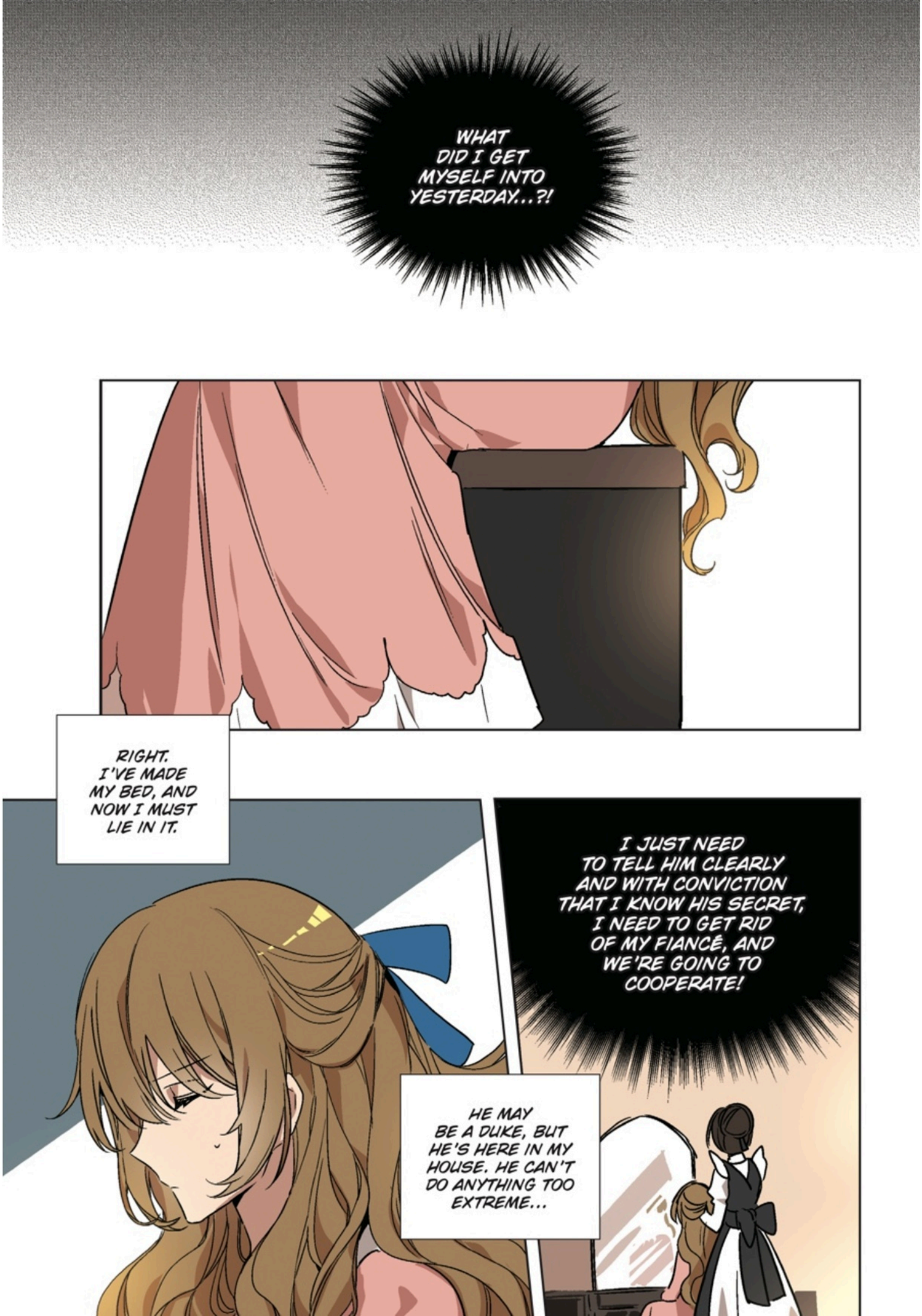
...A PUPPY CROSSED MY PATH.

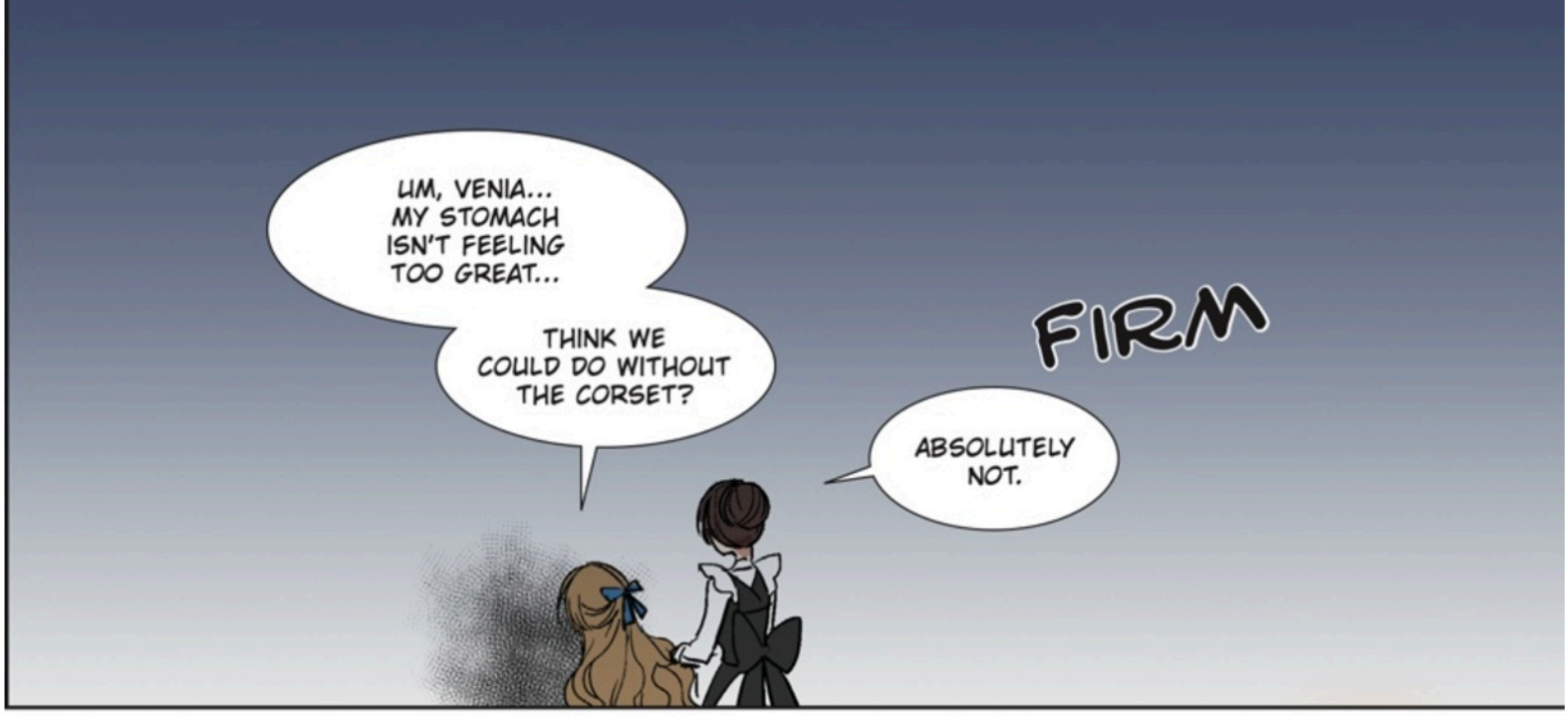

I'M HUNG-OVER...
KNOCK KNOCK
URGH...
VENIA, JUST... LET ME SLEEP A LITTLE LONGER TODAY...
RUSTLE
PLEASE GET UP, MISS. YOU HAVE A VISITOR.

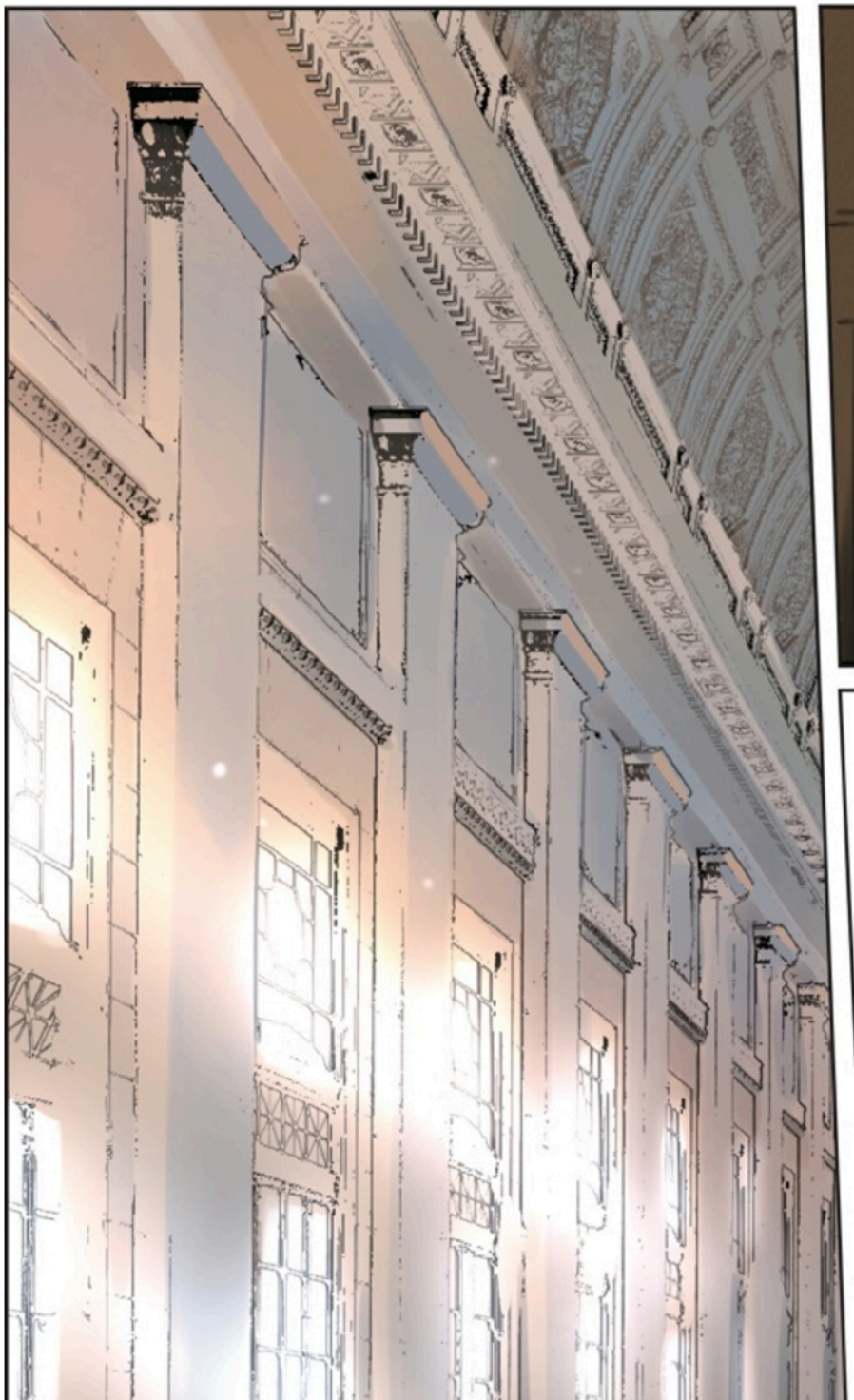

WHAT VISITOR...
I'M NOT UP TO IT...JUST TELL THEM TO COME BA—
FLOP
IT IS DUKE WYNKNIGHT, MISS.
SNAP


WAIT, WHO—?
BOLT

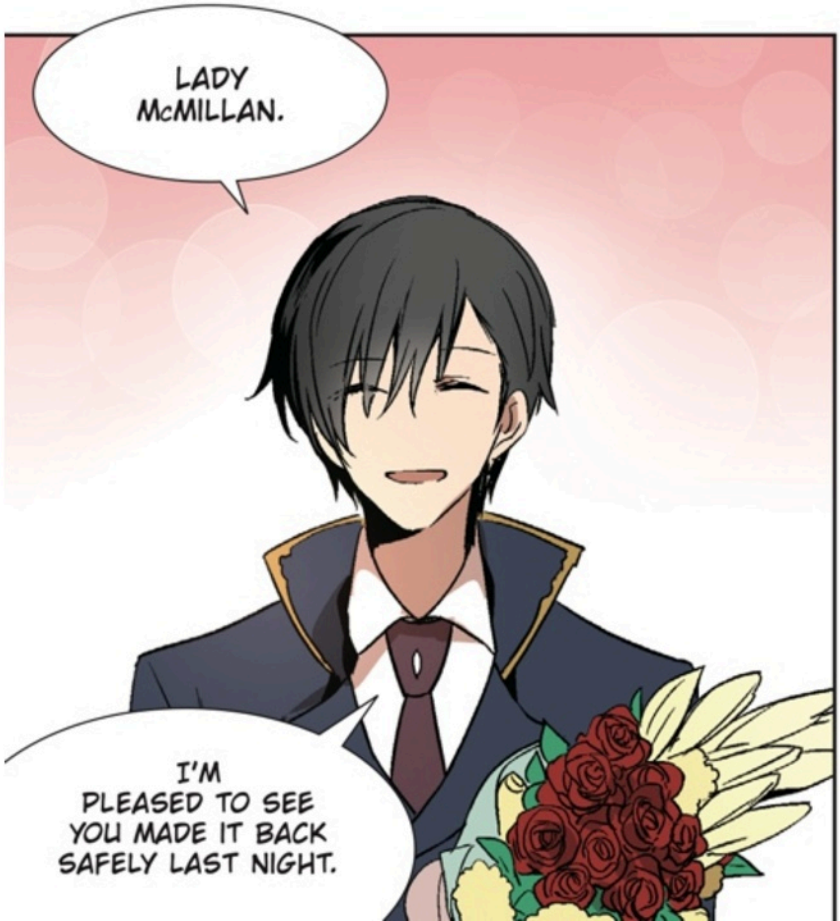

THE DUKE IS HERE TO SEE YOU.
WHY?!
ACK!

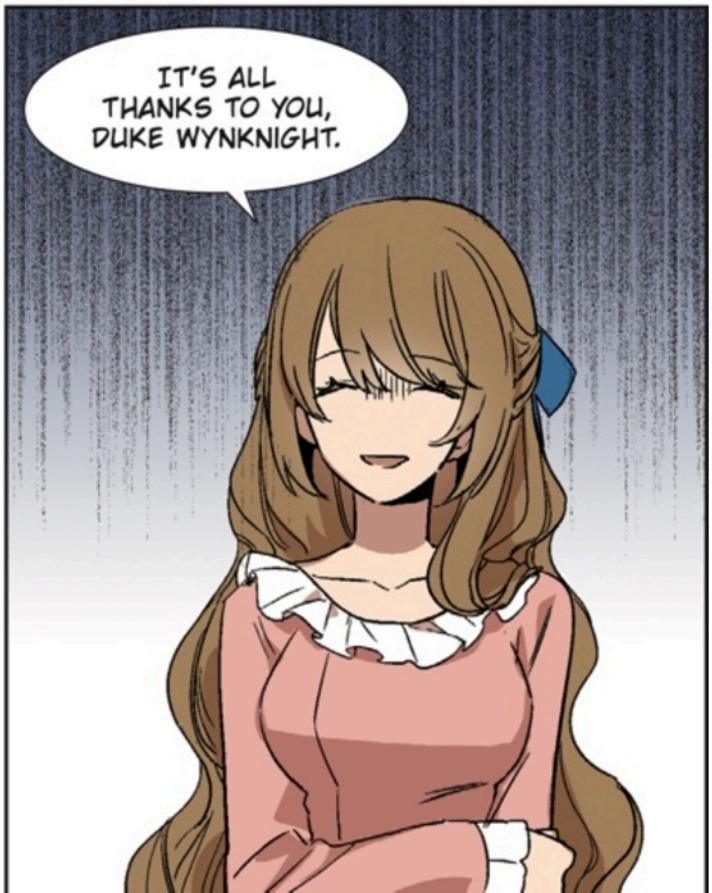

WHAT DID I GET MYSELF INTO YESTERDAY...?!
RIGHT. I'VE MADE MY BED, AND NOW I MUST LIE IN IT.
I JUST NEED TO TELL HIM CLEARLY AND WITH CONVICTION THAT I KNOW HIS SECRET, I NEED TO GET RID OF MY FIANCÉ, AND WE'RE GOING TO COOPERATE!
HE MAY BE A DUKE, BUT HE'S HERE IN MY HOUSE. HE CAN'T DO ANYTHING TOO EXTREME...

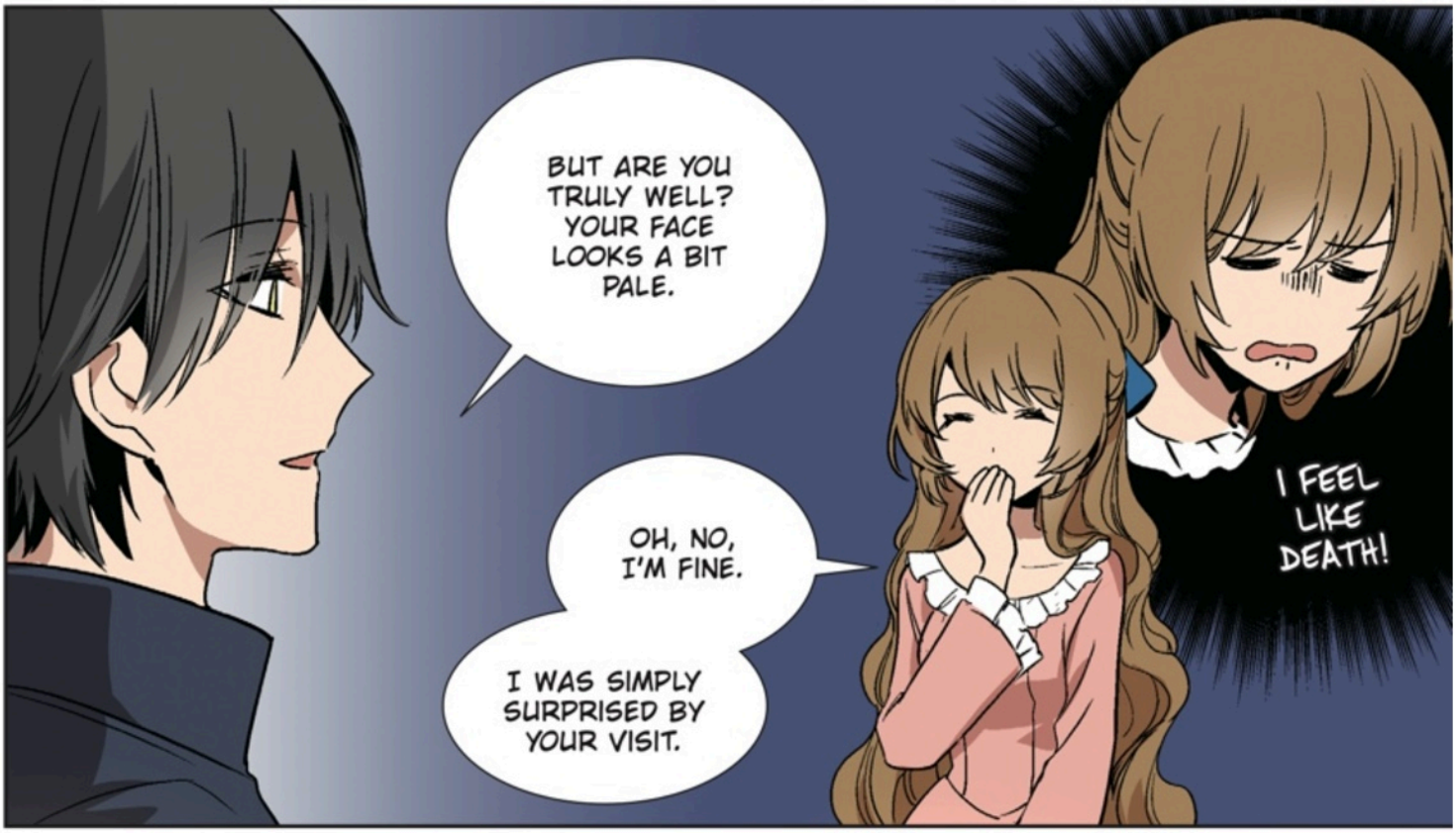

UM, VENIA... MY STOMACH ISN'T FEELING TOO GREAT...
THINK WE COULD DO WITHOUT THE CORSET?
FIRM
ABSOLUTELY NOT.



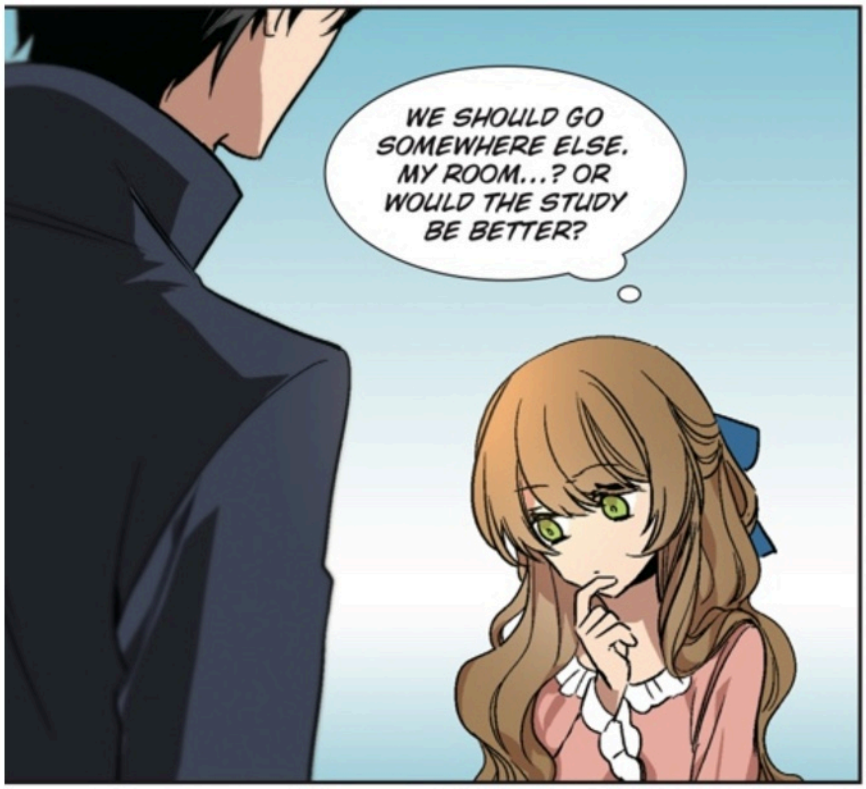
DUKE WYNKNIGHT AWAITS YOU IN THE PARLOR.


LADY McMILLAN.
I'M PLEASED TO SEE YOU MADE IT BACK SAFELY LAST NIGHT.


IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, DUKE WYNKNIGHT.


BUT ARE YOU TRULY WELL? YOUR FACE LOOKS A BIT PALE.
OH, NO, I'M FINE.
I WAS SIMPLY SURPRISED BY YOUR VISIT.
I FEEL LIKE DEATH!

BONK
OH PLEASE...
YOU'RE MAKING ME BLUSH...
I HOPE YOU'LL EXCUSE ME. I WAS OVERTAKEN BY THE URGE TO SEE YOU, EVEN IF JUST FOR A MOMENT.
IT'S LIKE HE'S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON FROM YESTERDAY.

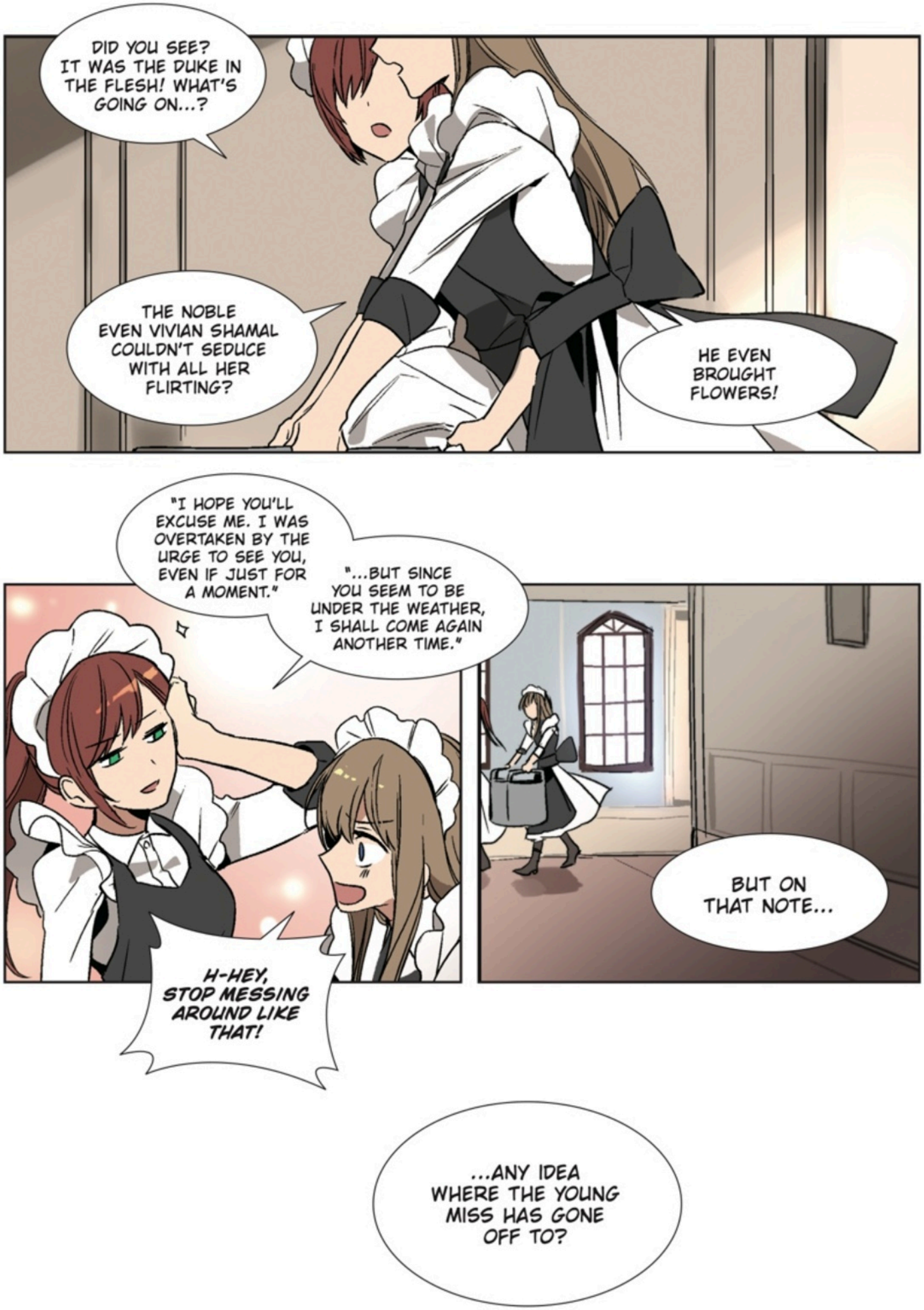


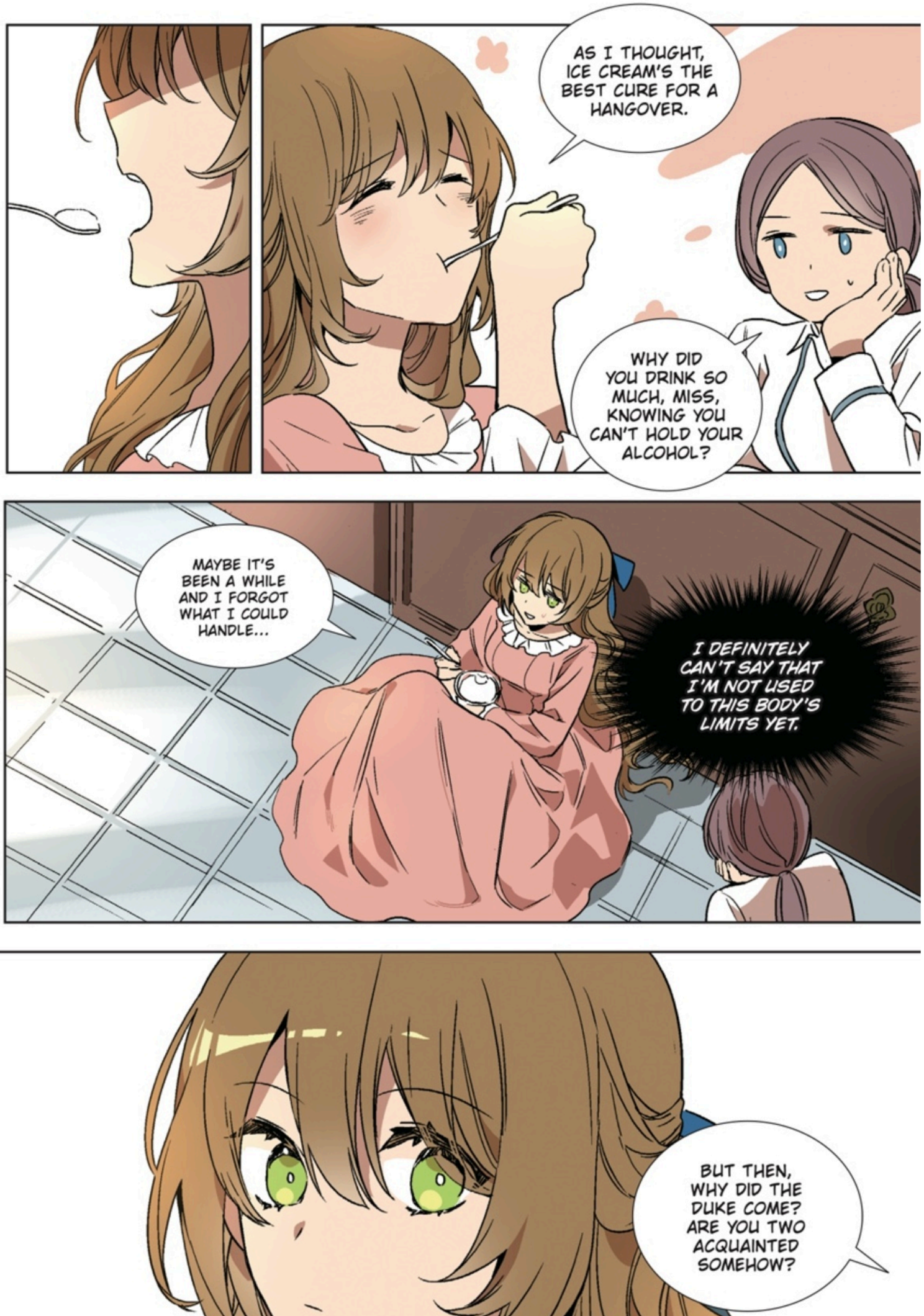
DUKE WYNKNIGHT—

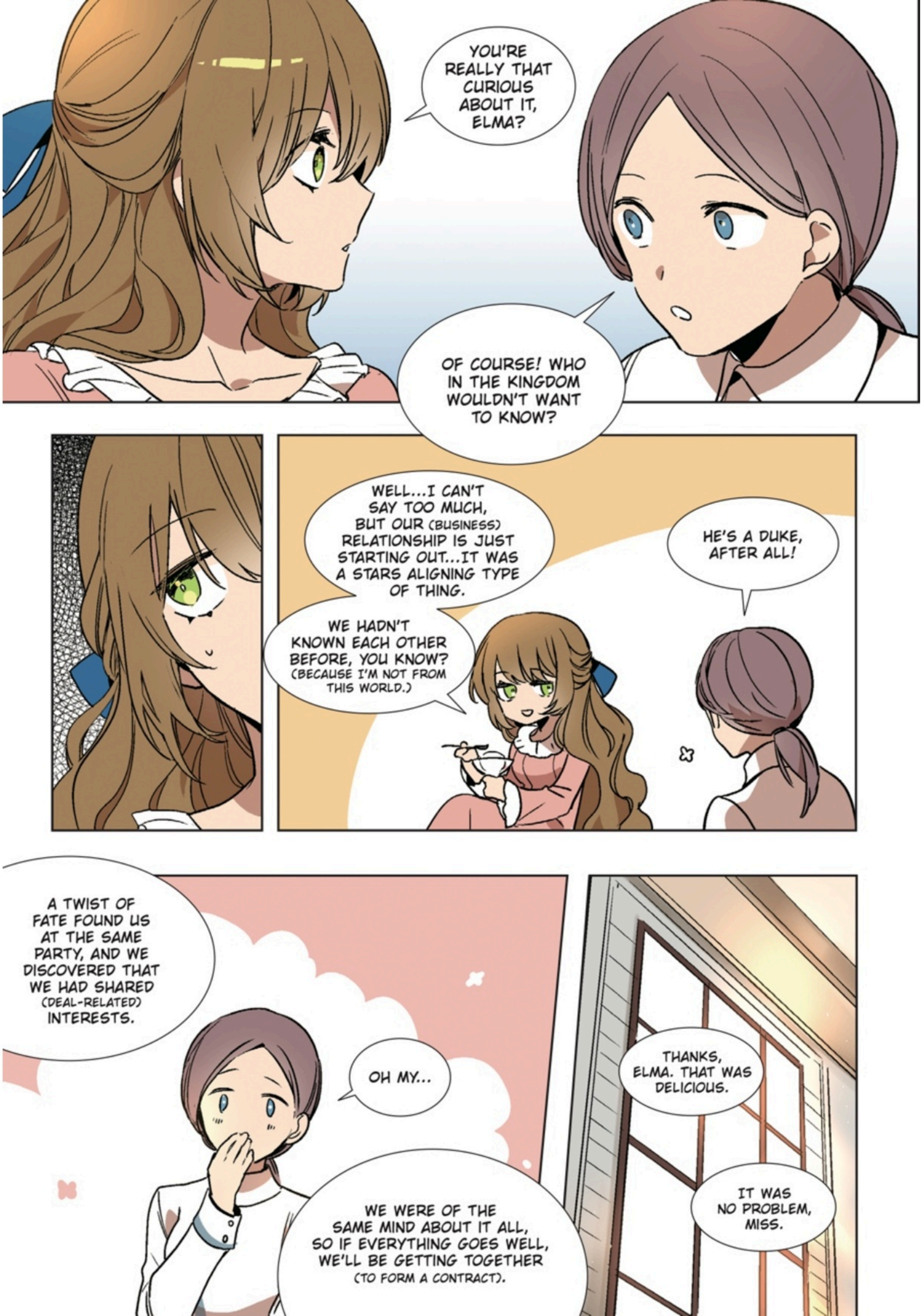
SHF

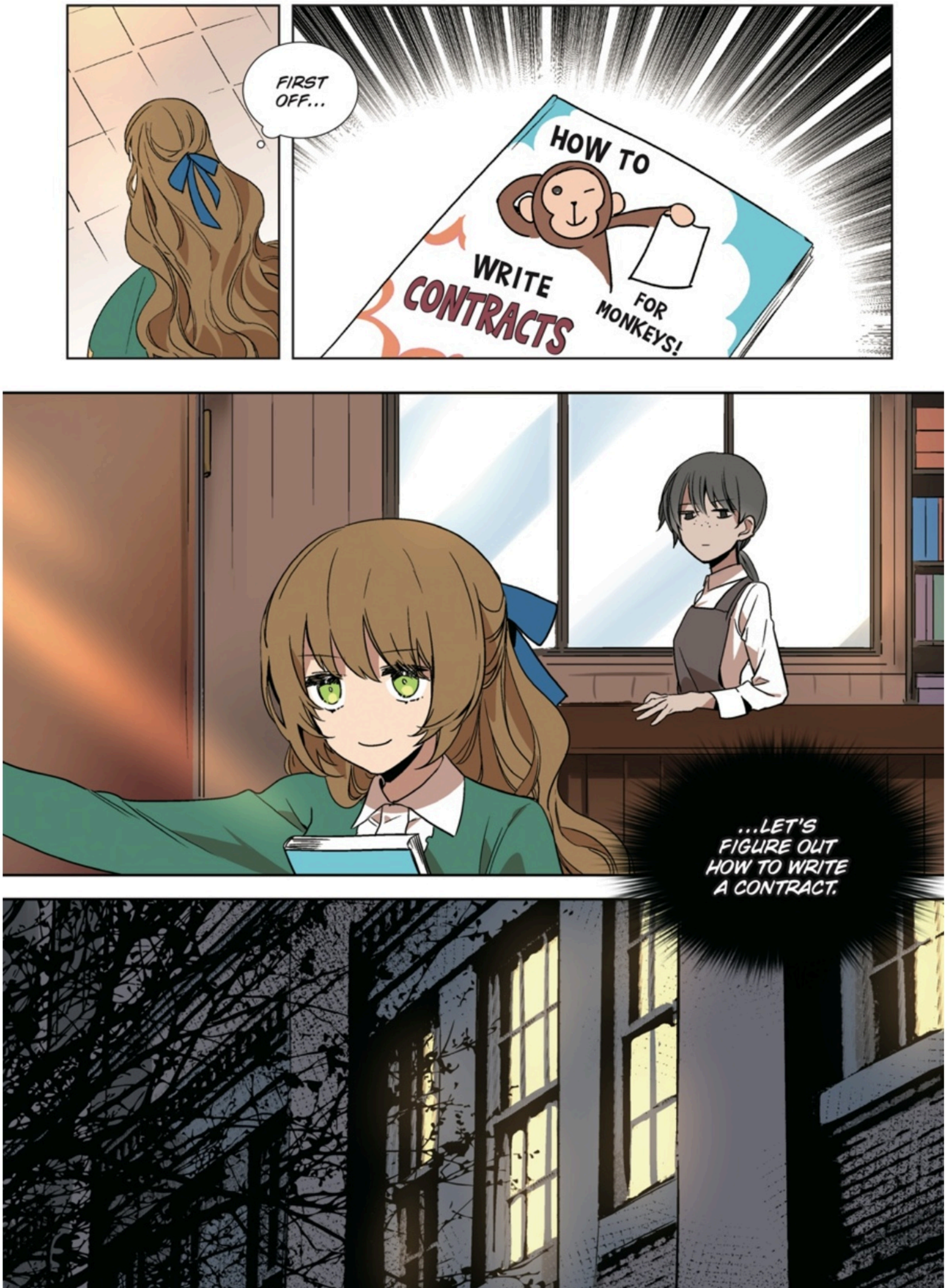
DUN
DUN
?
DUUUN

BLECH—!

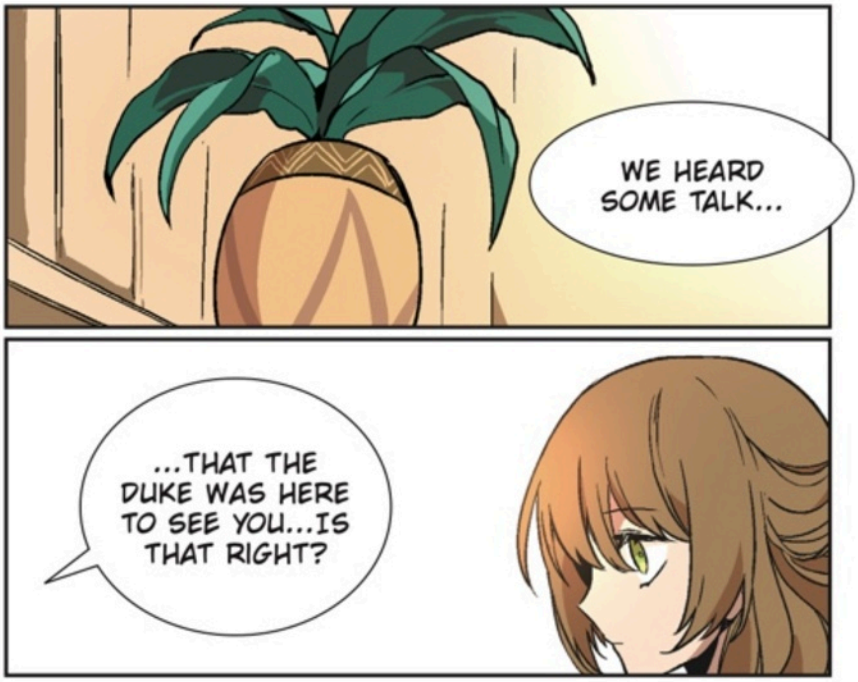

DID YOU SEE? IT WAS THE DUKE IN THE FLESH! WHAT'S GOING ON...?
THE NOBLE EVEN VIVIAN SHAMAL COULDN'T SEDUCE WITH ALL HER FLIRTING?
HE EVEN BROUGHT FLOWERS!
"I HOPE YOU'LL EXCUSE ME. I WAS OVERTAKEN BY THE URGE TO SEE YOU, EVEN IF JUST FOR A MOMENT."
"...BUT SINCE YOU SEEM TO BE UNDER THE WEATHER, I SHALL COME AGAIN ANOTHER TIME."
H-HEY, STOP MESSING AROUND LIKE THAT!
BUT ON THAT NOTE...
...ANY IDEA WHERE THE YOUNG MISS HAS GONE OFF TO?


AS I THOUGHT, ICE CREAM'S THE BEST CURE FOR A HANGOVER.
WHY DID YOU DRINK SO MUCH, MISS, KNOWING YOU CAN'T HOLD YOUR ALCOHOL?
MAYBE IT'S BEEN A WHILE AND I FORGOT WHAT I COULD HANDLE...
I DEFINITELY CAN'T SAY THAT I'M NOT USED TO THIS BODY'S LIMITS YET.
BUT THEN, WHY DID THE DUKE COME? ARE YOU TWO ACQUAINTED SOMEHOW?

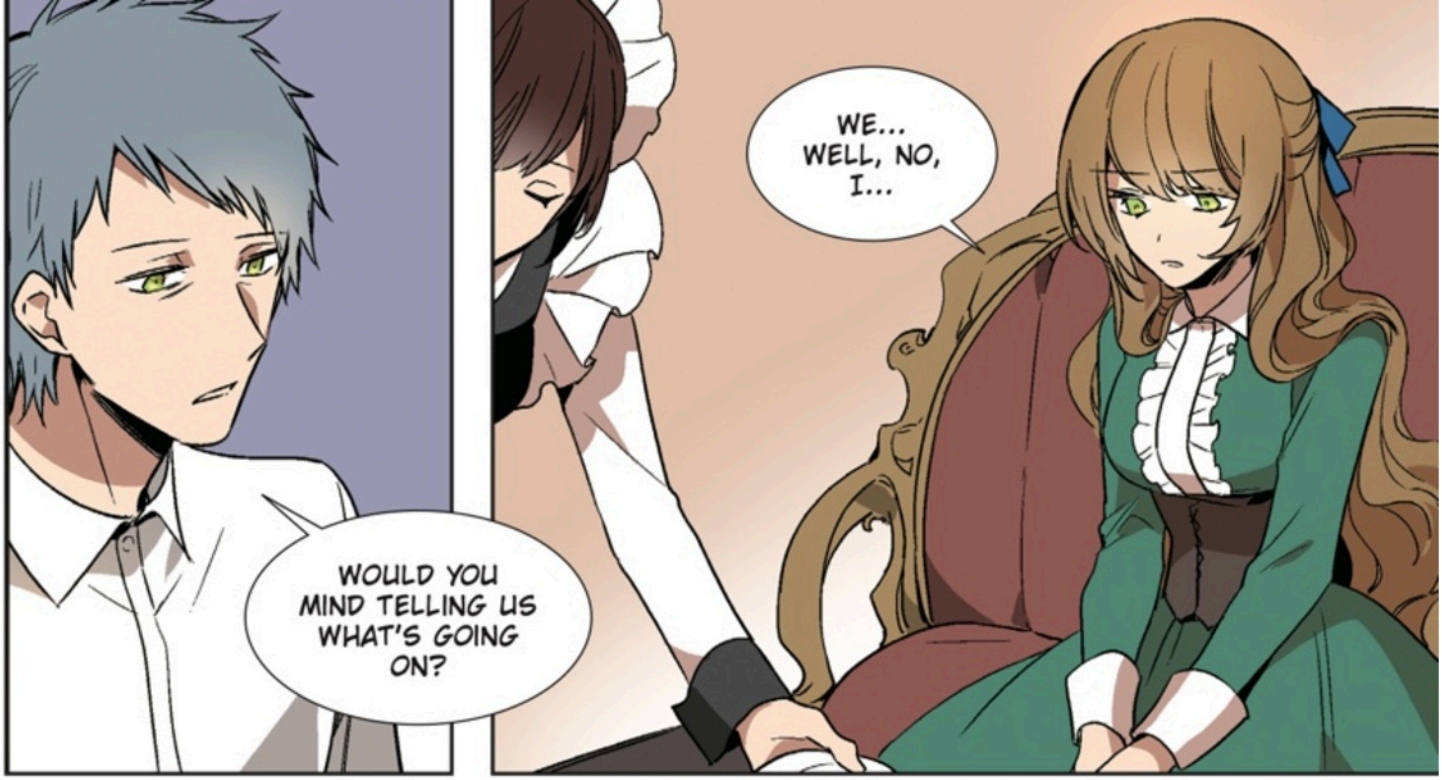

YOU'RE REALLY THAT CURIOUS ABOUT IT, ELMA?
OF COURSE! WHO IN THE KINGDOM WOULDN'T WANT TO KNOW?
WELL...I CAN'T SAY TOO MUCH, BUT OUR (BUSINESS) RELATIONSHIP IS JUST STARTING OUT...IT WAS A STARS ALIGNING TYPE OF THING.
WE HADN'T KNOWN EACH OTHER BEFORE, YOU KNOW? (BECAUSE I'M NOT FROM THIS WORLD.)
HE'S A DUKE, AFTER ALL!
A TWIST OF FATE FOUND US AT THE SAME PARTY, AND WE DISCOVERED THAT WE HAD SHARED (DEAL-RELATED) INTERESTS.
OH MY...
WE WERE OF THE SAME MIND ABOUT IT ALL, SO IF EVERYTHING GOES WELL, WE'LL BE GETTING TOGETHER (TO FORM A CONTRACT).
THANKS, ELMA. THAT WAS DELICIOUS.
IT WAS NO PROBLEM, MISS.


FIRST OFF...
HOW TO
WRITE
CONTRACTS
FOR MONKEYS!
...LET'S FIGURE OUT HOW TO WRITE A CONTRACT.

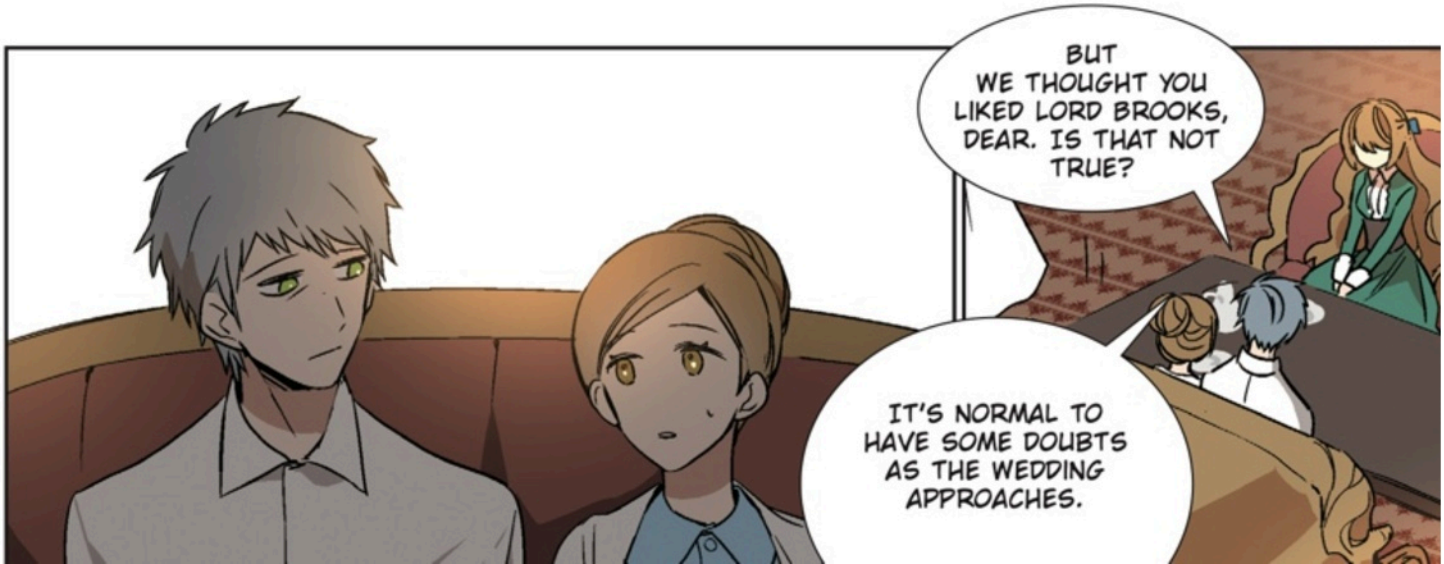
KNOCK KNOCK
RAELIANA, WE'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOU FOR A MOMENT.
OKAY...!!
SHOVE

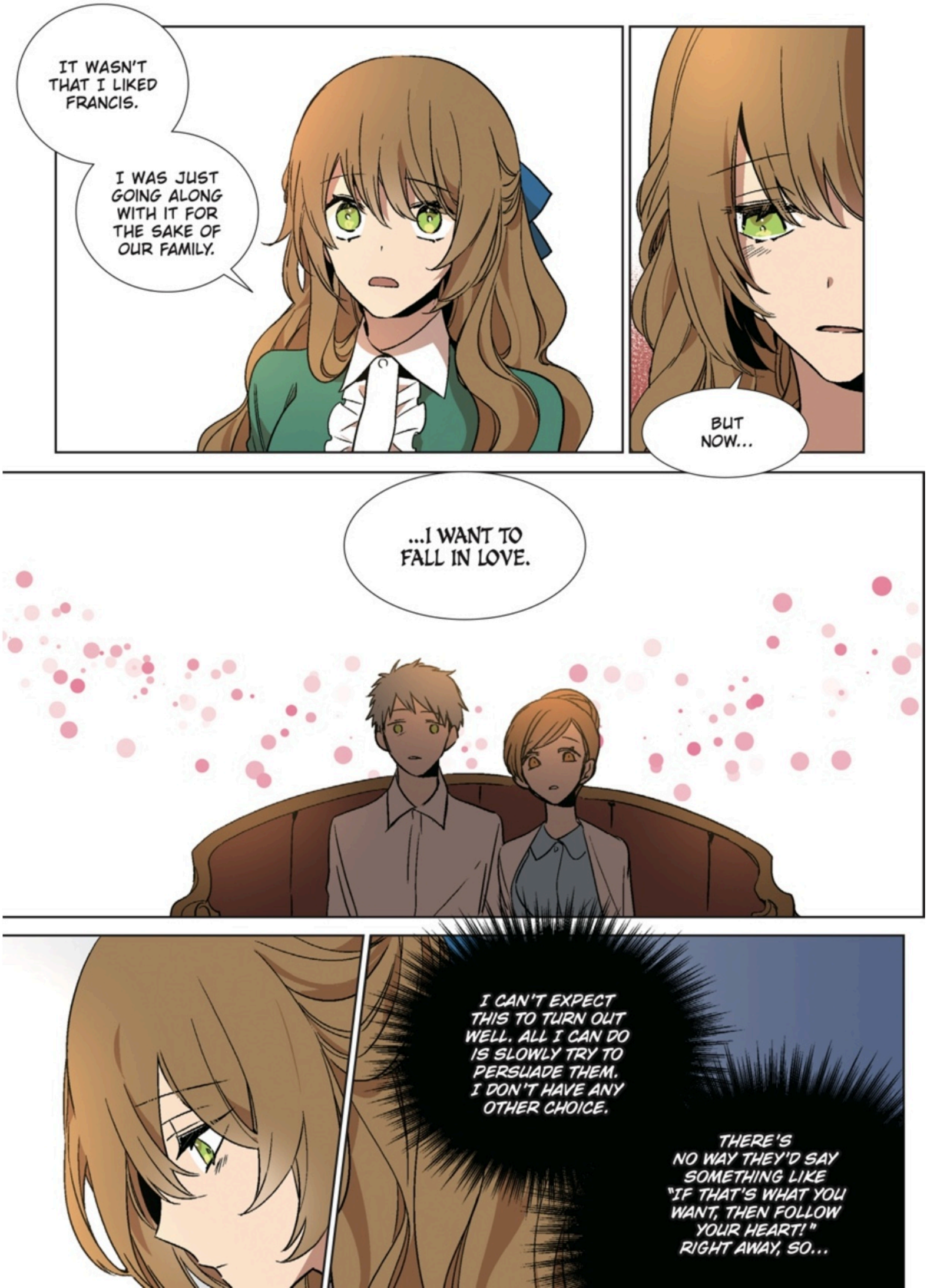

WE HEARD SOME TALK...
...THAT THE DUKE WAS HERE TO SEE YOU...IS THAT RIGHT?

...YES, THAT'S RIGHT.


WE... WELL, NO, I...
WOULD YOU MIND TELLING US WHAT'S GOING ON?

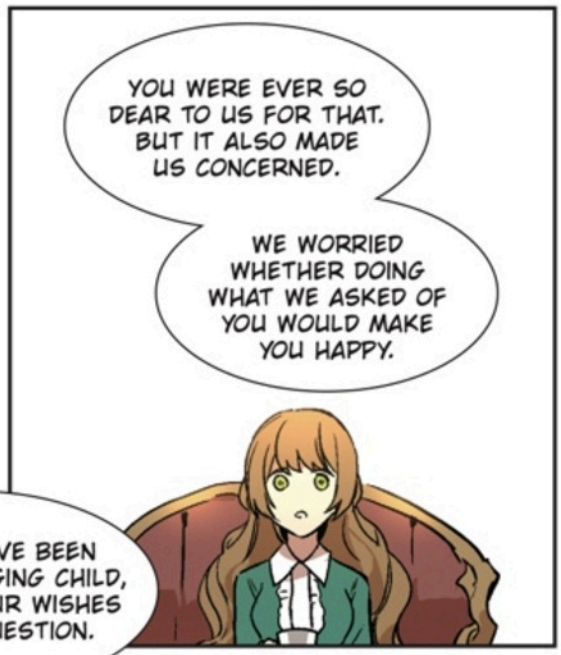
...WANT TO CALL OFF THE ENGAGEMENT WITH LORD BROOKS.


BUT WE THOUGHT YOU LIKED LORD BROOKS, DEAR. IS THAT NOT TRUE?
IT'S NORMAL TO HAVE SOME DOUBTS AS THE WEDDING APPROACHES.


IT WASN'T THAT I LIKED FRANCIS.
I WAS JUST GOING ALONG WITH IT FOR THE SAKE OF OUR FAMILY.
BUT NOW...
...I WANT TO FALL IN LOVE.
I CAN'T EXPECT THIS TO TURN OUT WELL. ALL I CAN DO IS SLOWLY TRY TO PERSUADE THEM. I DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE.
THERE'S NO WAY THEY'D SAY SOMETHING LIKE "IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, THEN FOLLOW YOUR HEART!" RIGHT AWAY, SO...

IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, THEN FOLLOW YOUR HEART.
I KNOW, BUT I'M NOT GIVING UP JUST LIKE—
WAIT WHAT?!
COUGH
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

RAELI...YOU'VE BEEN SUCH AN OBLIGING CHILD, FOLLOWING OUR WISHES WITHOUT QUESTION.

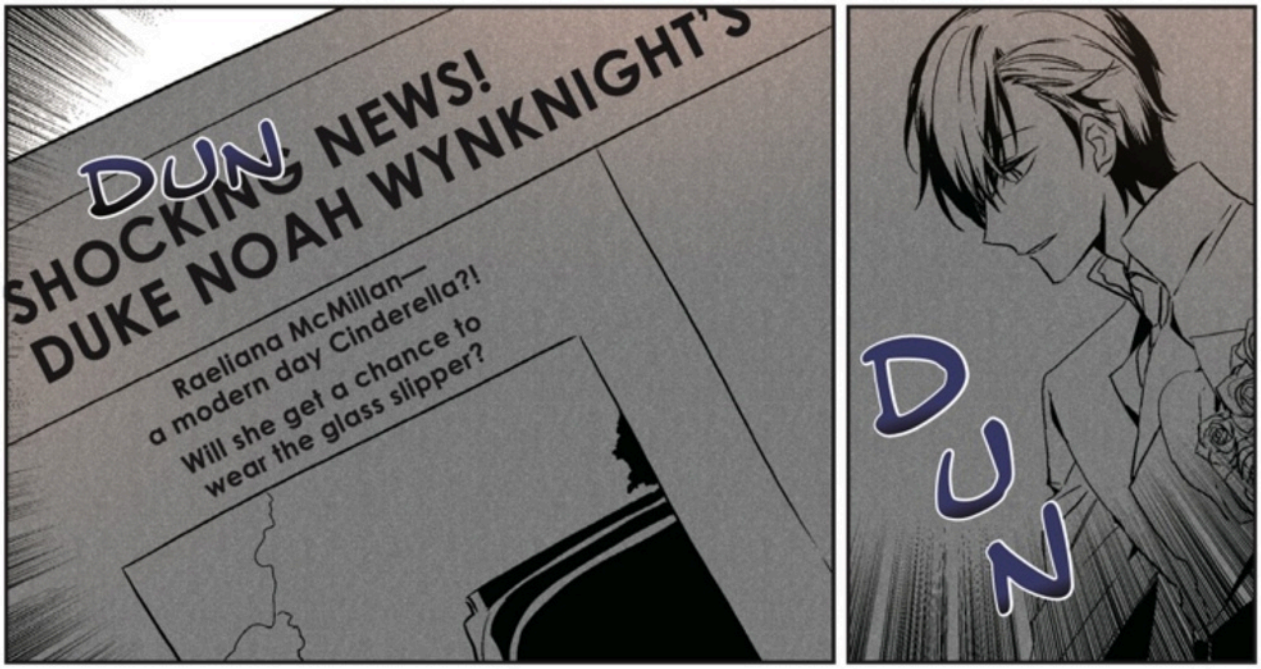

YOU WERE EVER SO DEAR TO US FOR THAT. BUT IT ALSO MADE US CONCERNED.
WE WORRIED WHETHER DOING WHAT WE ASKED OF YOU WOULD MAKE YOU HAPPY.

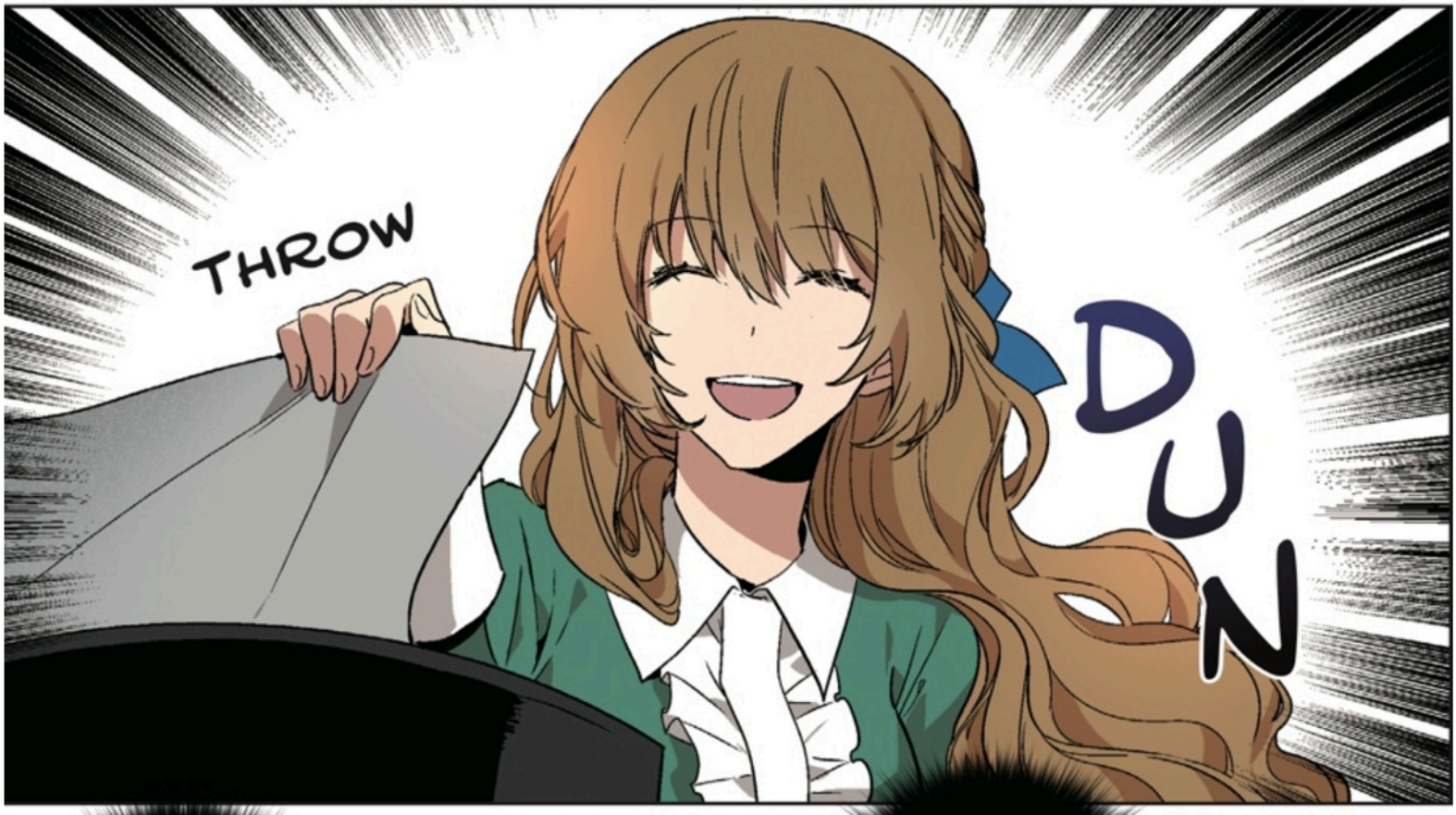
THAT'S RIGHT.
YOU NEEDN'T ONLY ACT THE PART OF AN OBEDIENT DAUGHTER.

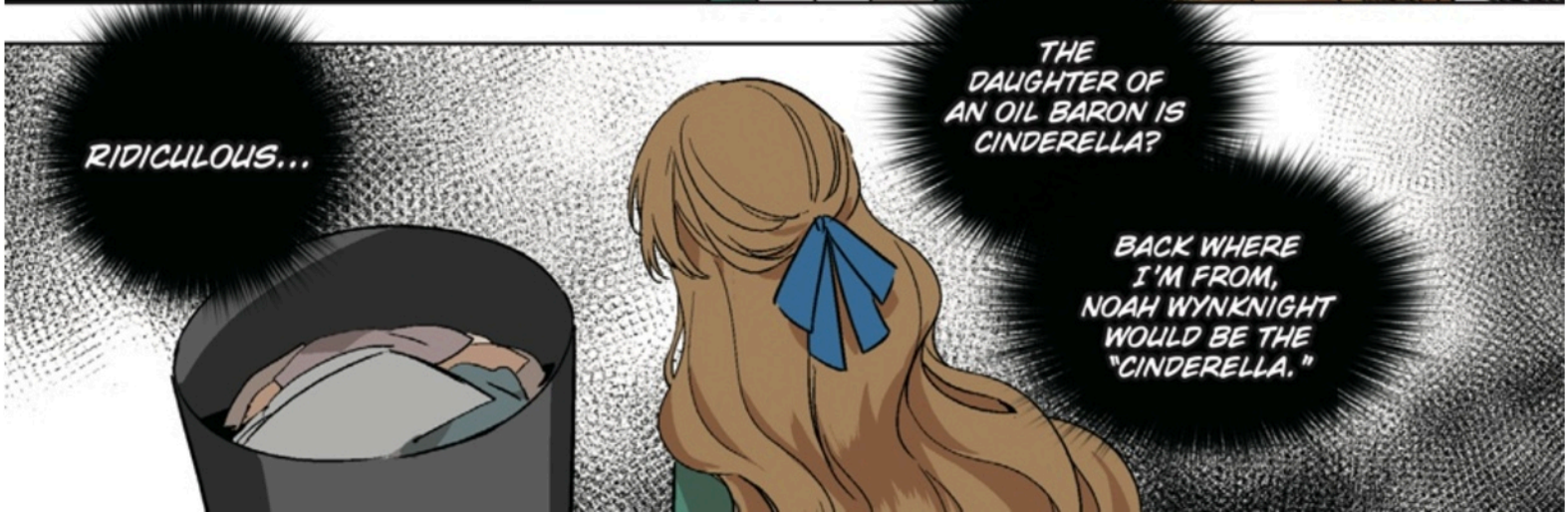
WE WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.
AND WE WILL ALWAYS SUPPORT YOUR ENDEAVORS IN LOVE.
CLENCH
THEIR CARE FOR MY WELL-BEING, THE DEPTH OF THEIR AFFECTION... MY HEART IS SO TOUCHED AND YET SO ASHAMED.

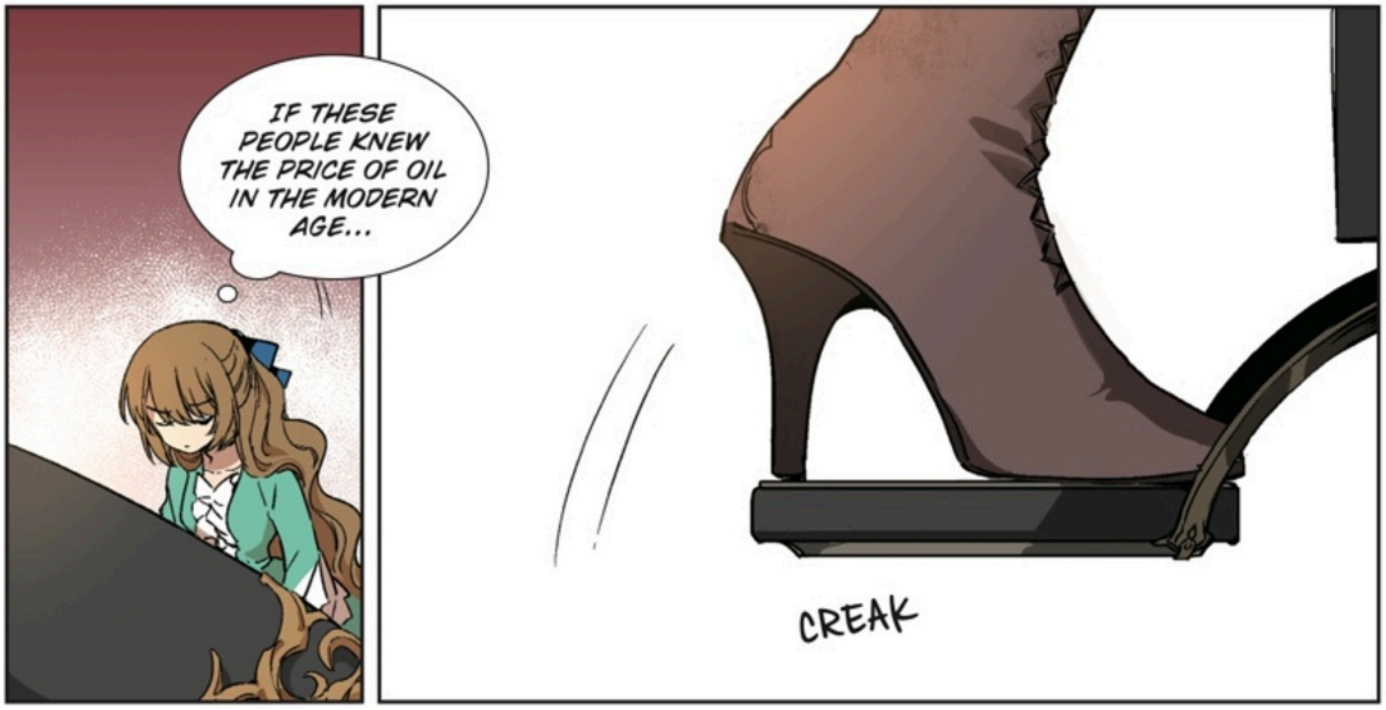
THANK YOU.....
"I...
"...AM NOT YOUR DAUGHTER."
THE WORDS I COULD NOT SAY PIERCED MY HEART.

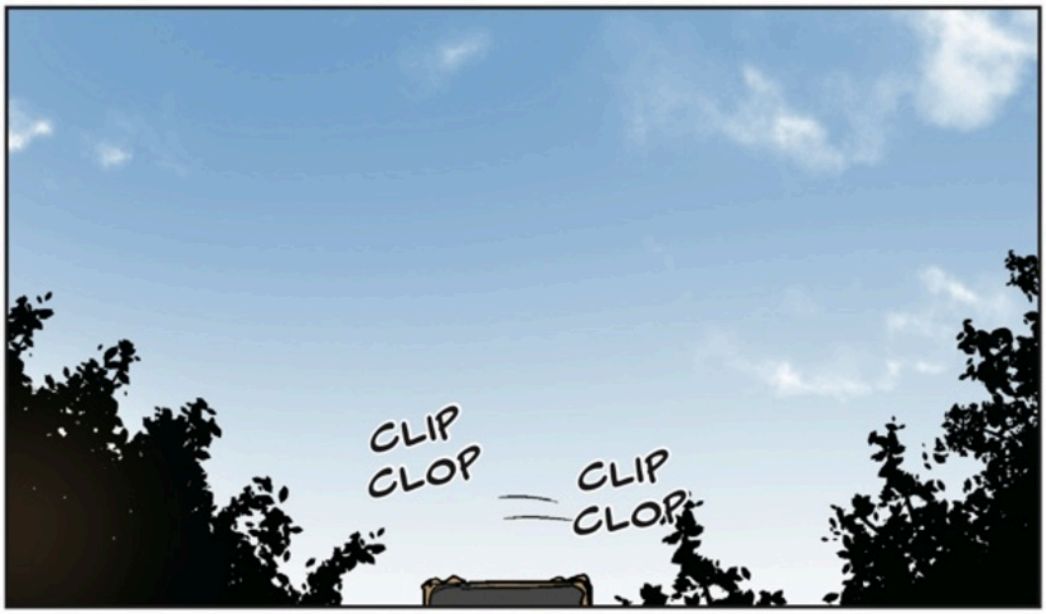
Why Raeliana Ended Up at the Duke's Mansion


DUN
SHOCKING NEWS!
DUKE NOAH WYNKNIGHT'S
Raeliana McMillan—
a modern day Cinderella?!
Will she get a chance to
wear the glass slipper?
DUN


THROW
DUN

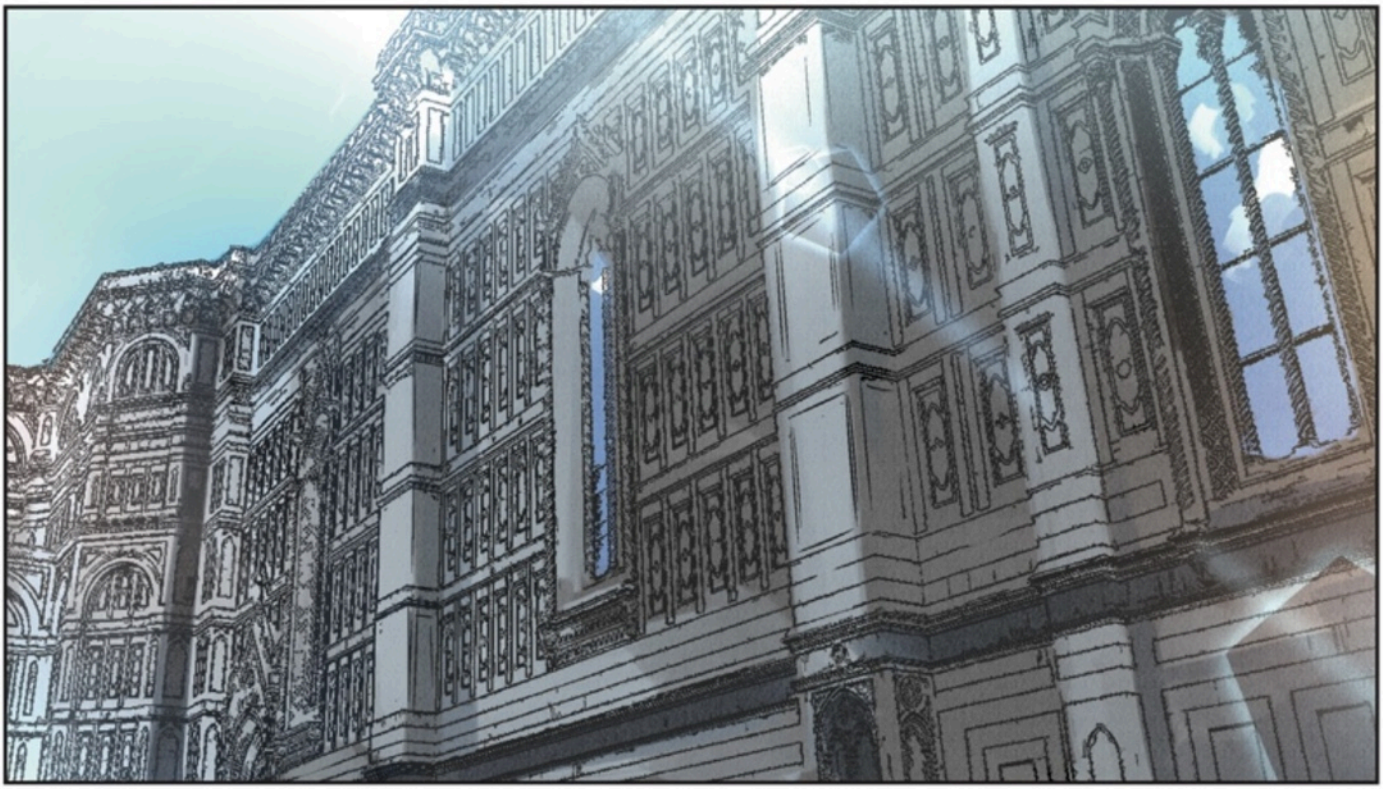

RIDICULOUS...
THE DAUGHTER OF AN OIL BARON IS CINDERELLA?
BACK WHERE I'M FROM, NOAH WYNKNIGHT WOULD BE THE "CINDERELLA."

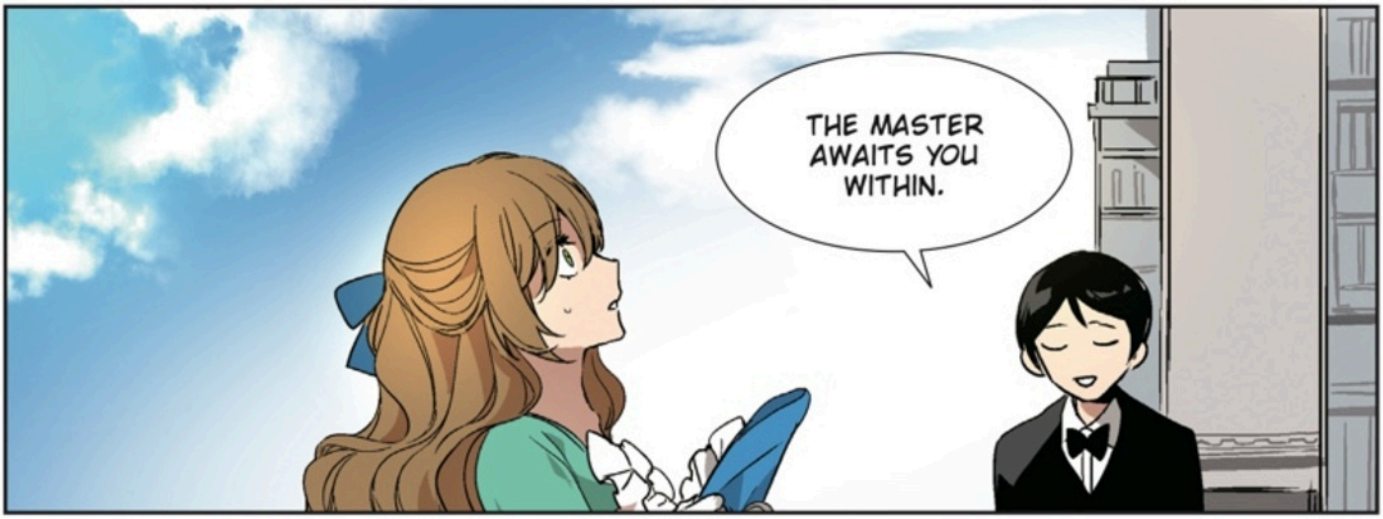

IF THESE PEOPLE KNEW THE PRICE OF OIL IN THE MODERN AGE...
CREAK


CLIP CLOP
CLIP CLOP

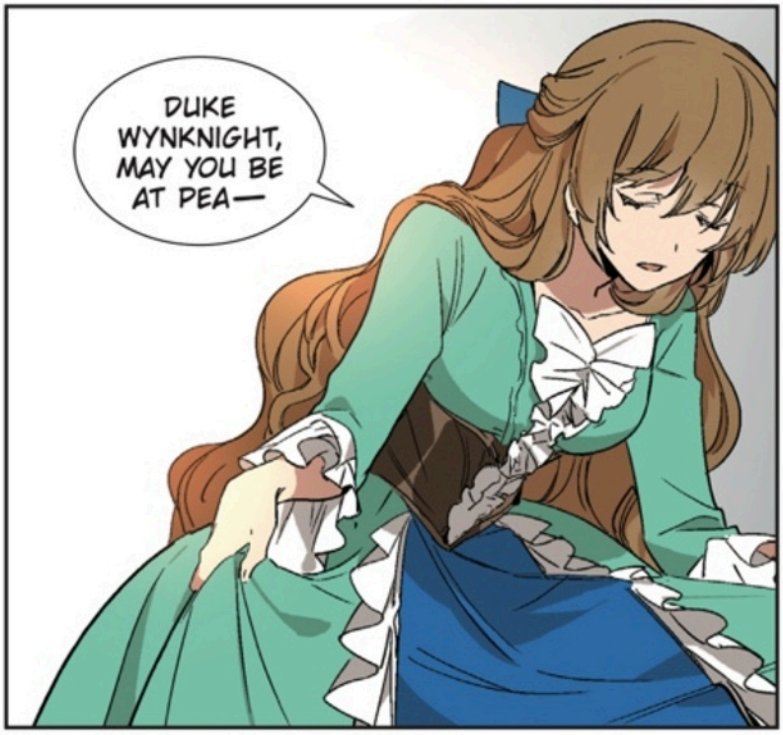
NEIIIGH

CLANK



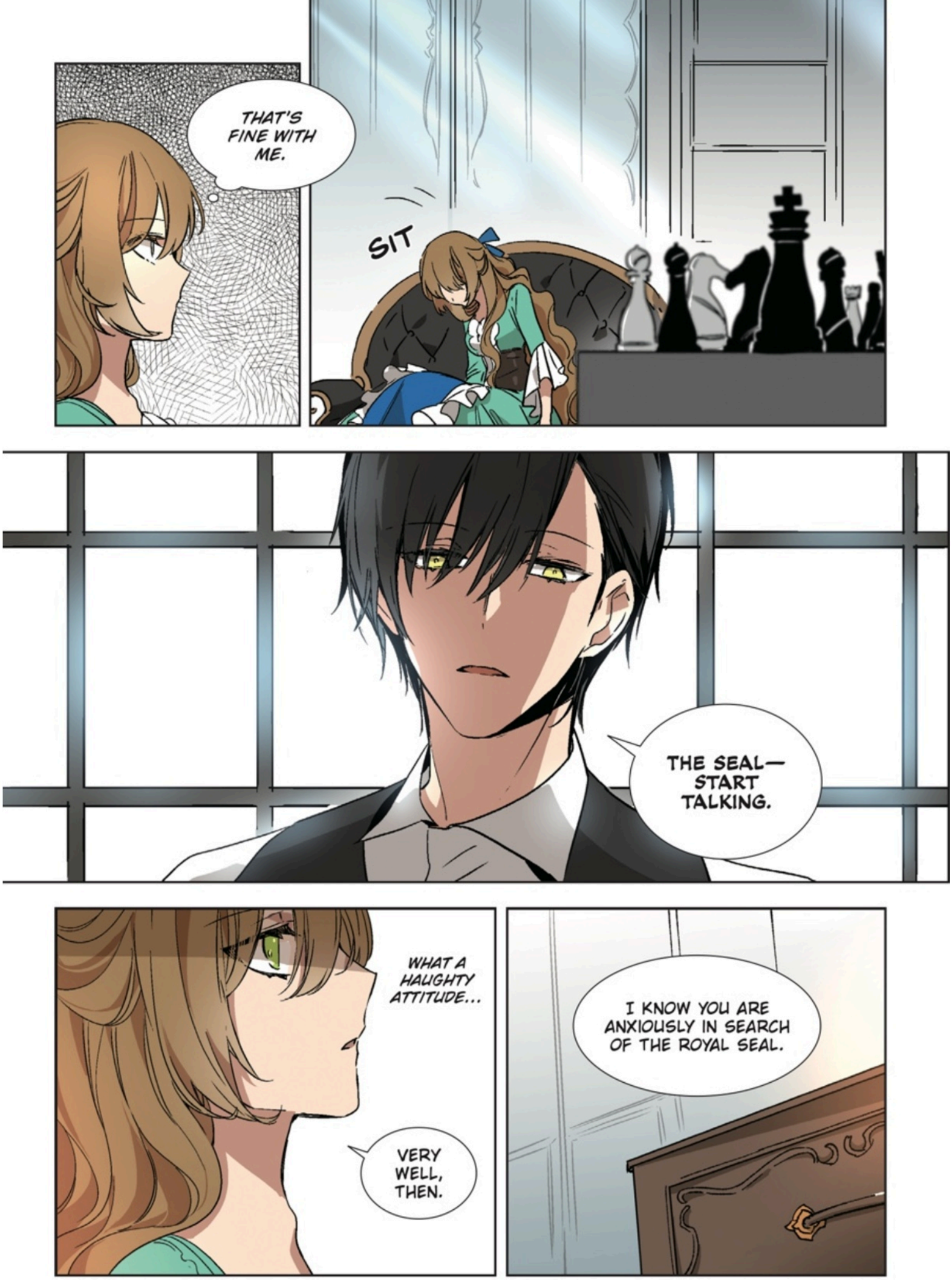

THE MASTER AWAITS YOU WITHIN.

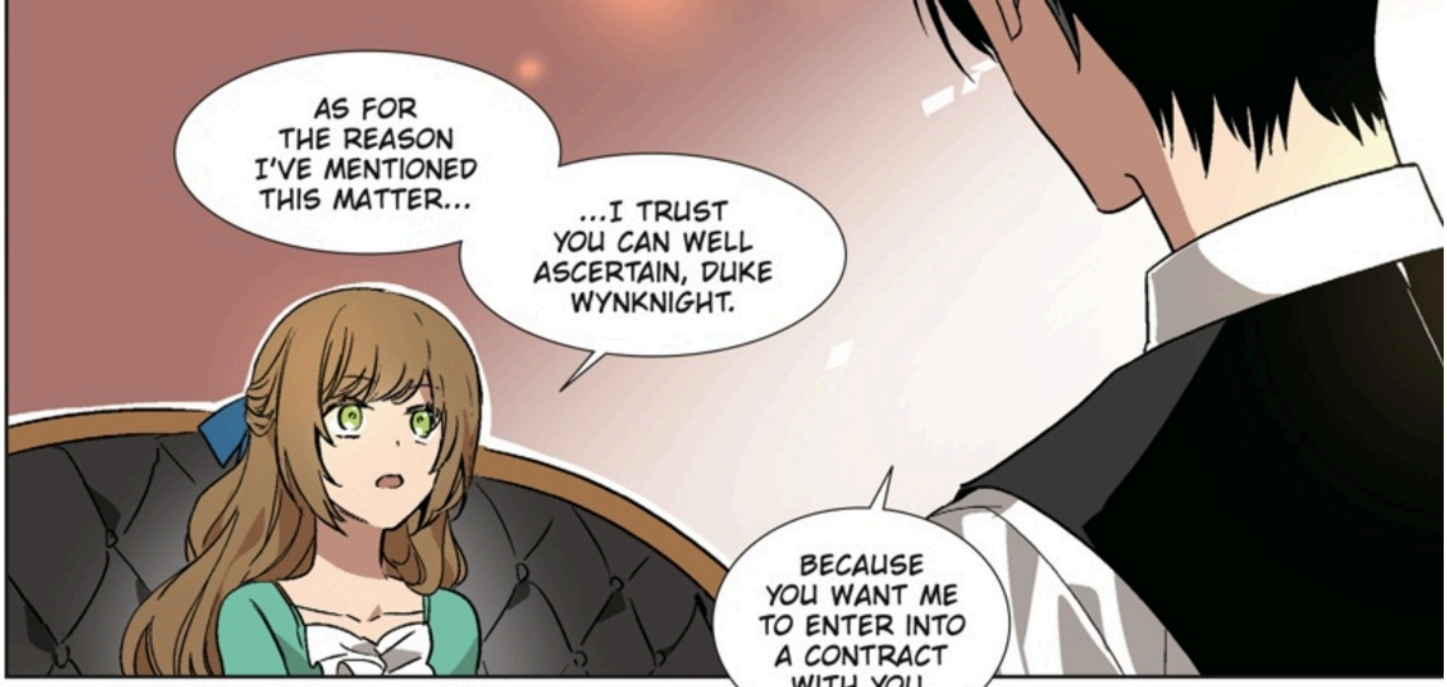
CREEEEAK


DUKE WYNKNIGHT, MAY YOU BE AT PEA—

LET'S DO AWAY WITH THE COURTESIES.

.....


THAT'S FINE WITH ME.
SIT
THE SEAL— START TALKING.
WHAT A HAUGHTY ATTITUDE...
VERY WELL, THEN.
I KNOW YOU ARE ANXIOUSLY IN SEARCH OF THE ROYAL SEAL.

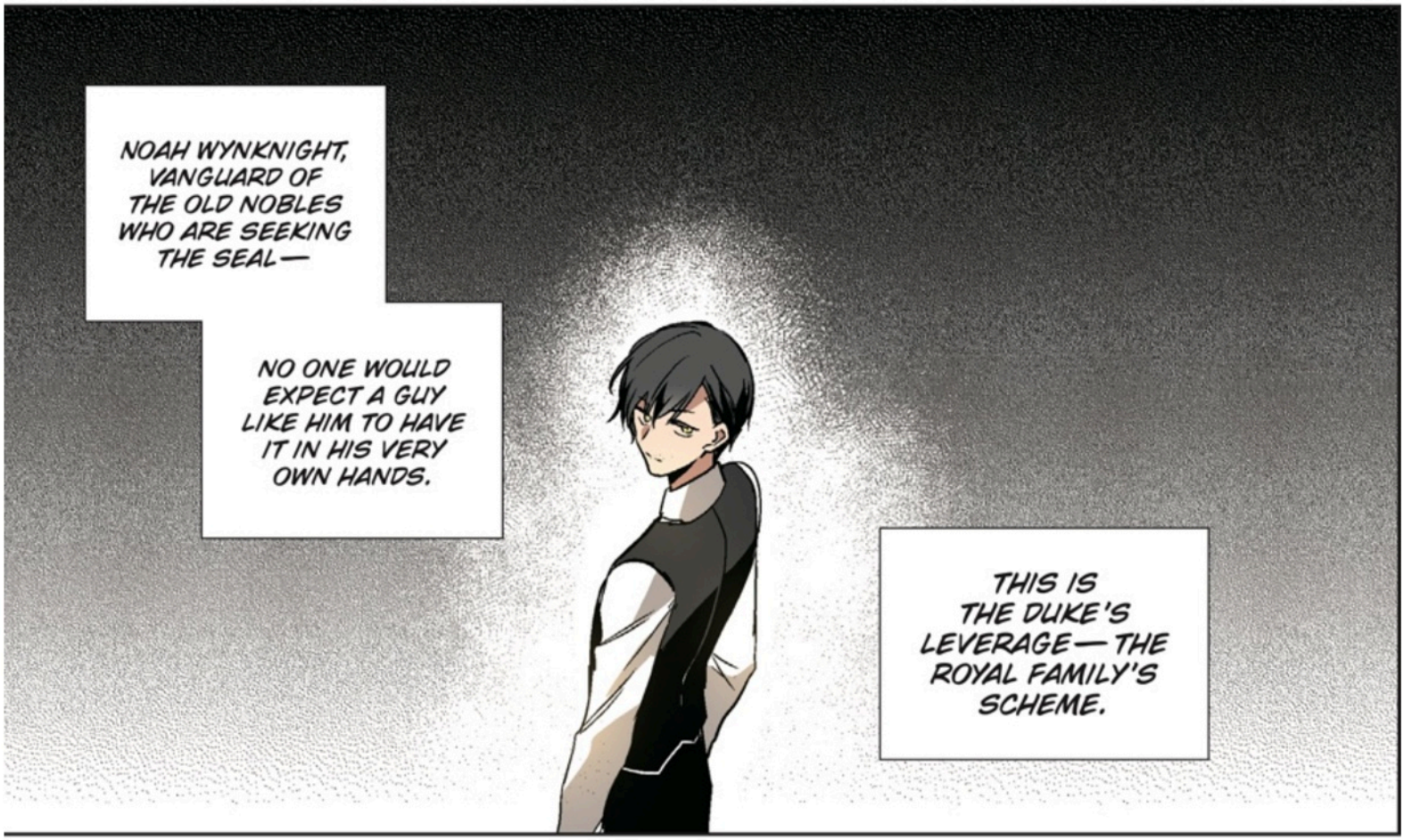

AS FOR THE REASON I'VE MENTIONED THIS MATTER...
...I TRUST YOU CAN WELL ASCERTAIN, DUKE WYNKNIGHT.
BECAUSE YOU WANT ME TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH YOU.

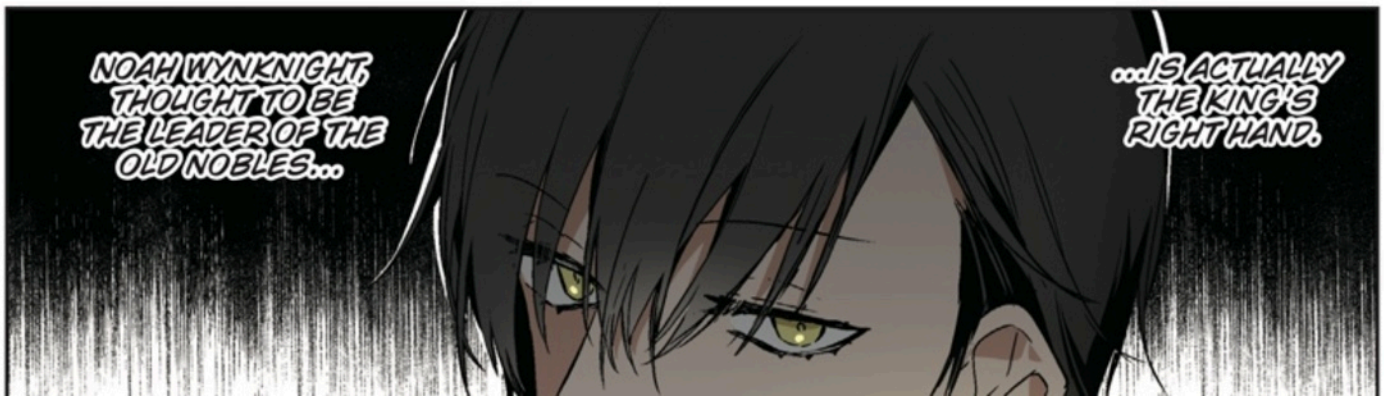
NO.

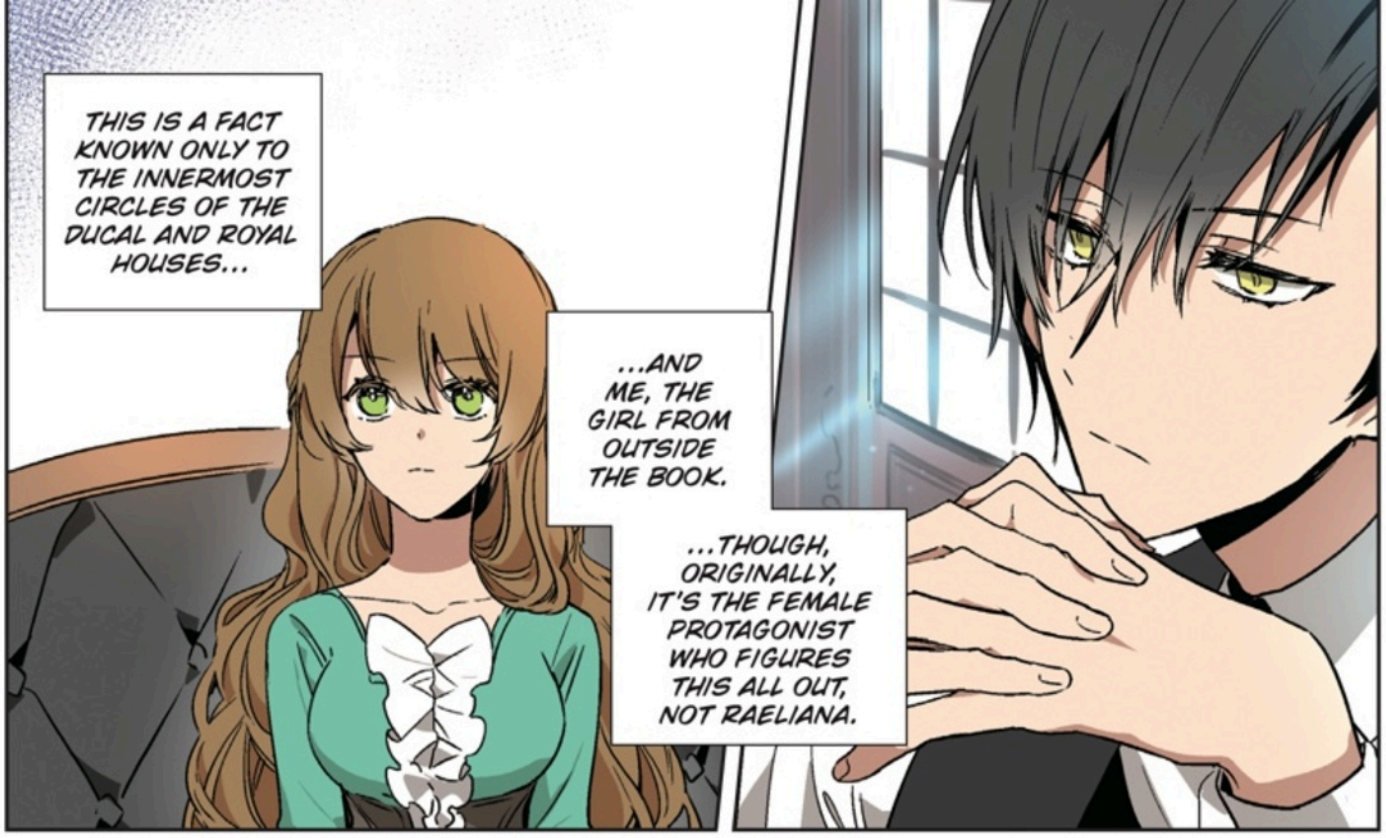
IT'S BECAUSE I AM WHAT YOU FEAR ABOVE ALL ELSE— SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THE SEAL'S LOCATION.

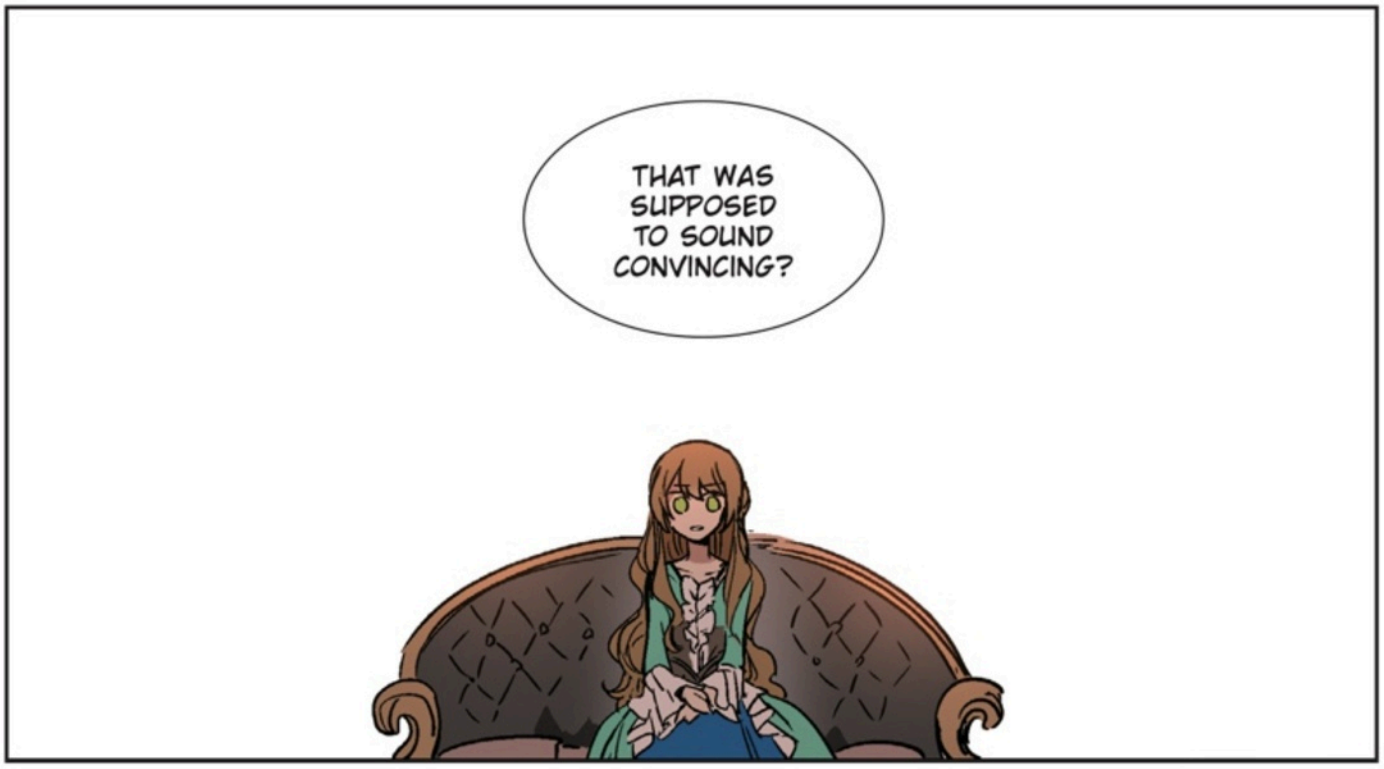
HMM...
AND WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?

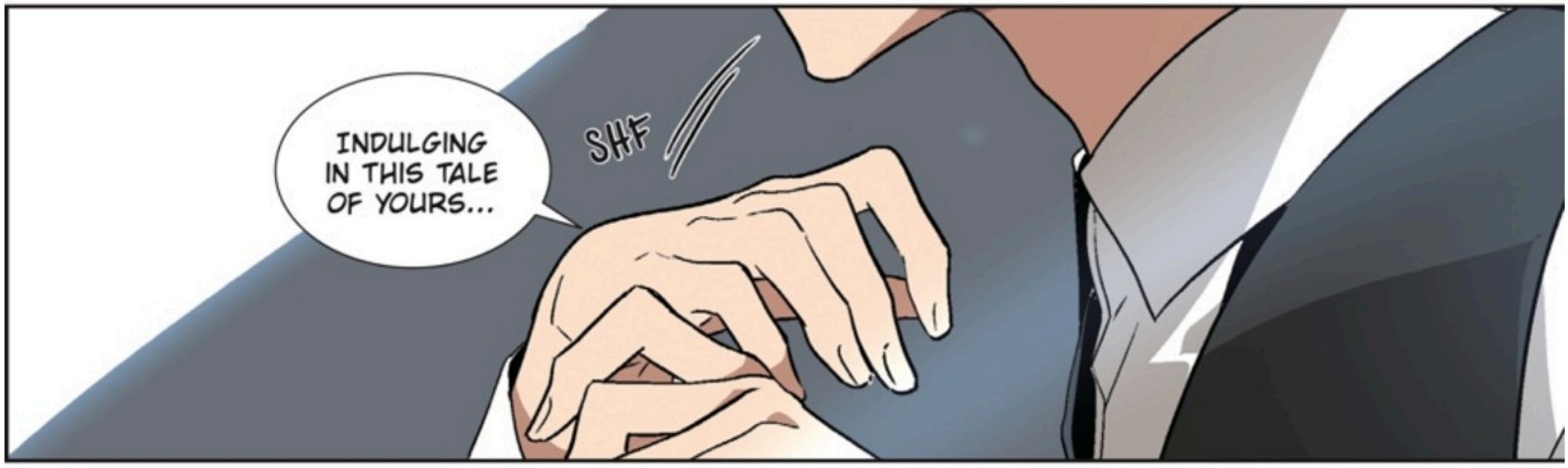
BECAUSE THE ROYAL SEAL...
...IS IN YOUR POSSESSION.


NOAH WYNKNIGHT, VANGUARD OF THE OLD NOBLES WHO ARE SEEKING THE SEAL—
NO ONE WOULD EXPECT A GUY LIKE HIM TO HAVE IT IN HIS VERY OWN HANDS.
THIS IS THE DUKE'S LEVERAGE—THE ROYAL FAMILY'S SCHEME.

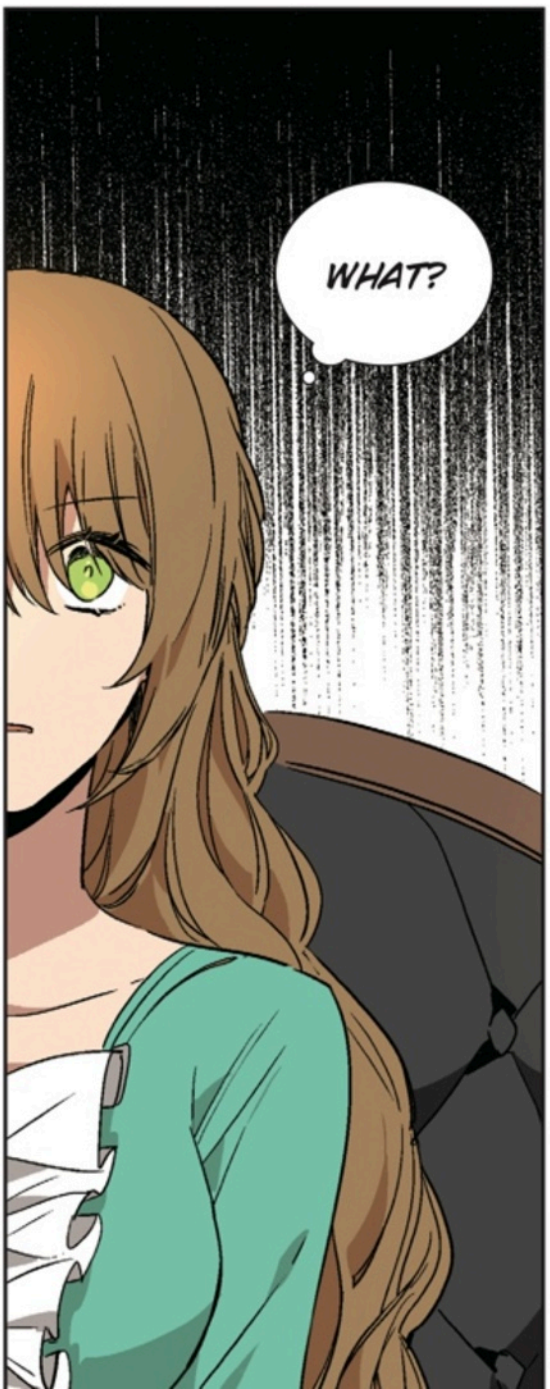

NOAH WYNKNIGHT, THOUGHT TO BE THE LEADER OF THE OLD NOBLES...
...IS ACTUALLY THE KING'S RIGHT HAND.


THIS IS A FACT KNOWN ONLY TO THE INNERMOST CIRCLES OF THE DUCAL AND ROYAL HOUSES...
...AND ME, THE GIRL FROM OUTSIDE THE BOOK.
...THOUGH, ORIGINALLY, IT'S THE FEMALE PROTAGONIST WHO FIGURES THIS ALL OUT, NOT RAELIANA.


THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO SOUND CONVINCING?

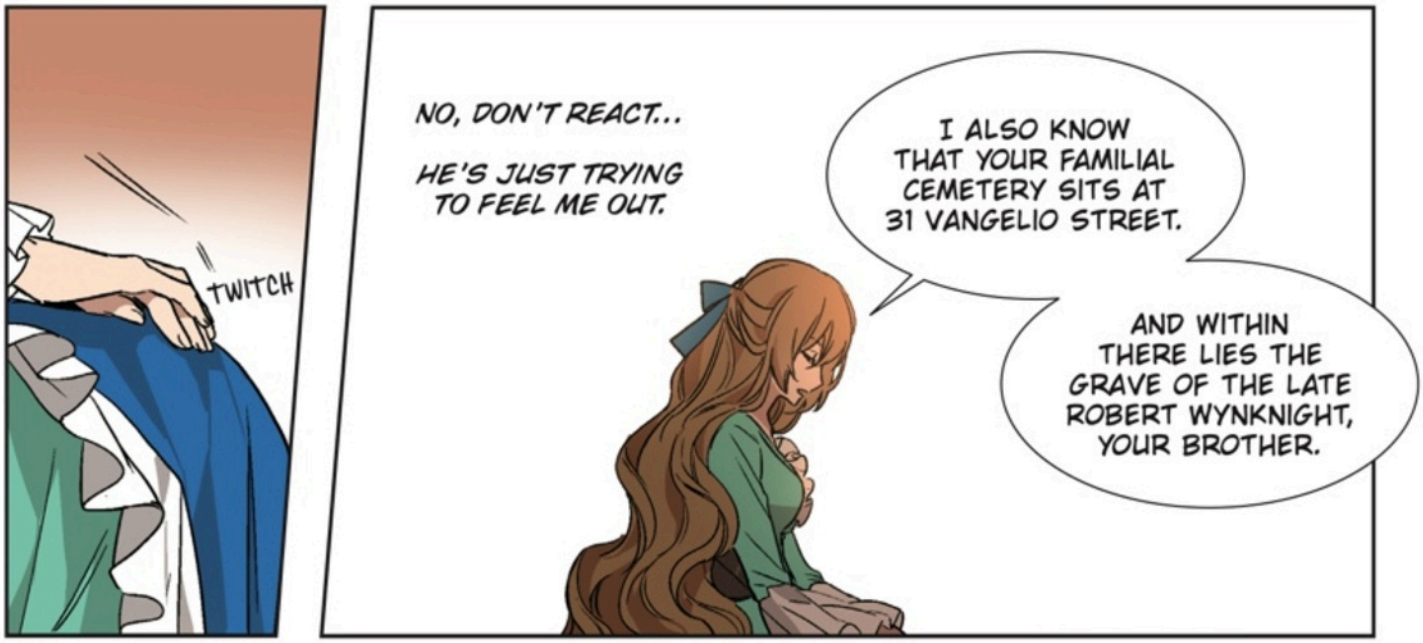

INDULGING IN THIS TALE OF YOURS...
SHF

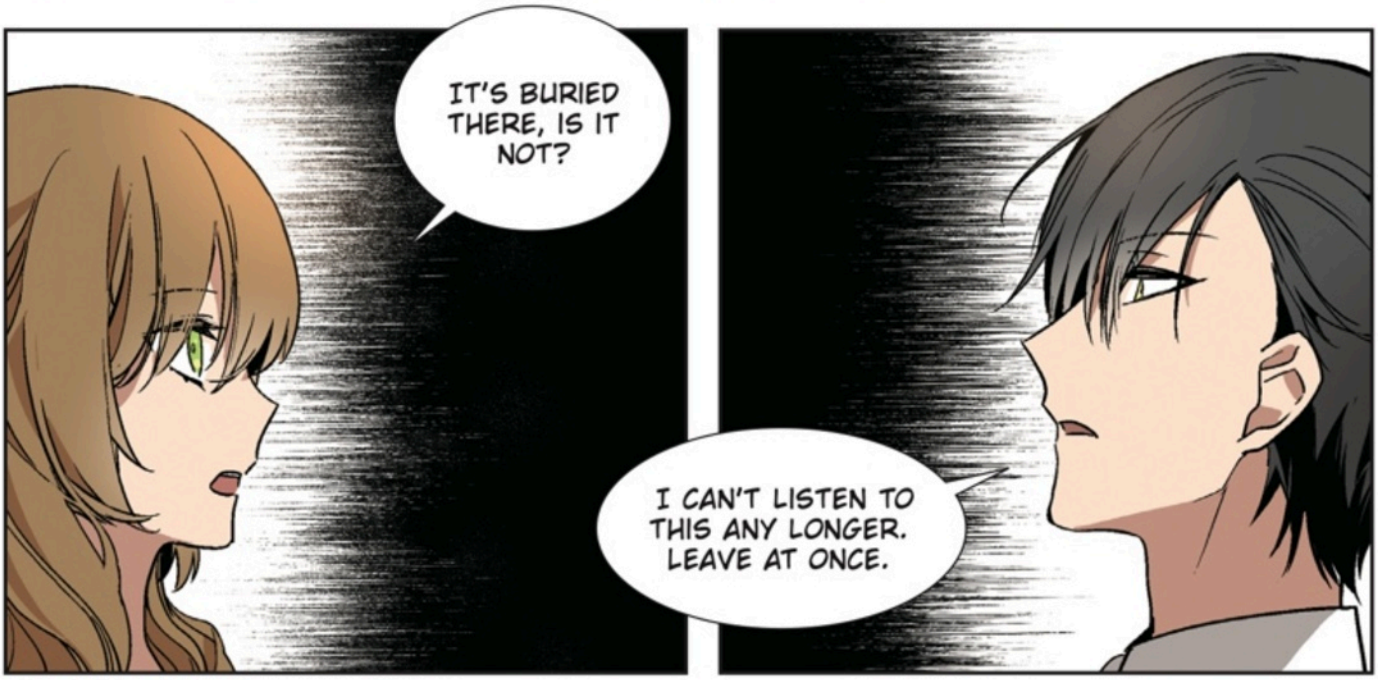
...HAS PROVED TO BE NOTHING BUT A BORING JOKE.

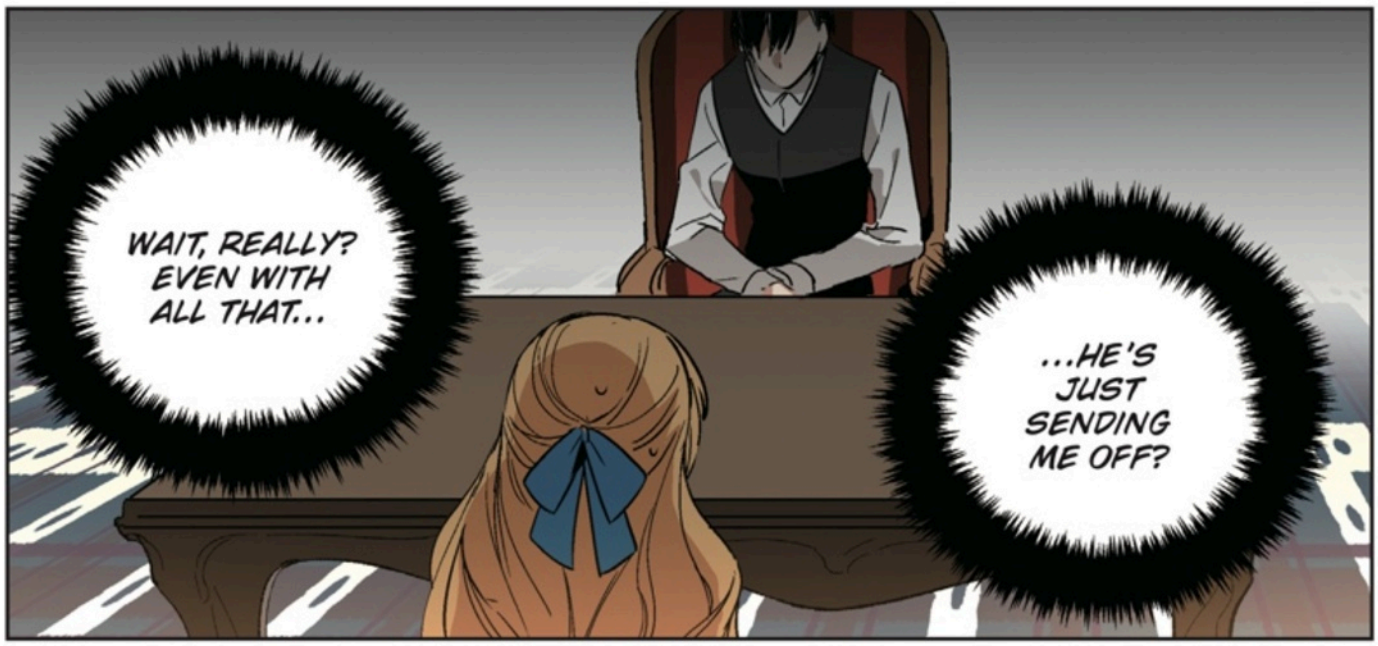

WHAT?

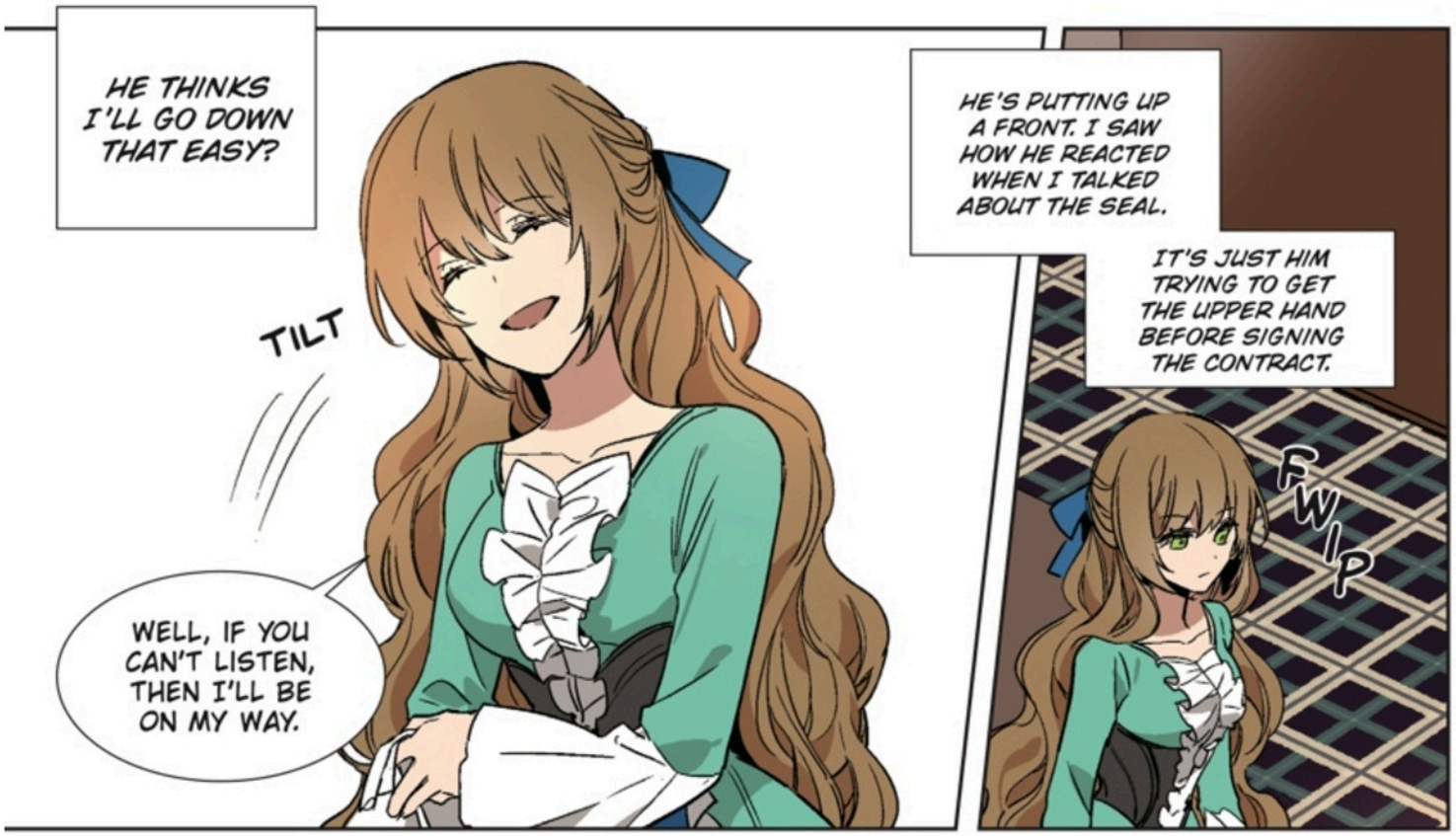
IT SEEMS I'VE MISJUDGED YOU...
...AND WASTED MY TIME.

SNAP
WE WON'T BE MAKING A DEAL.

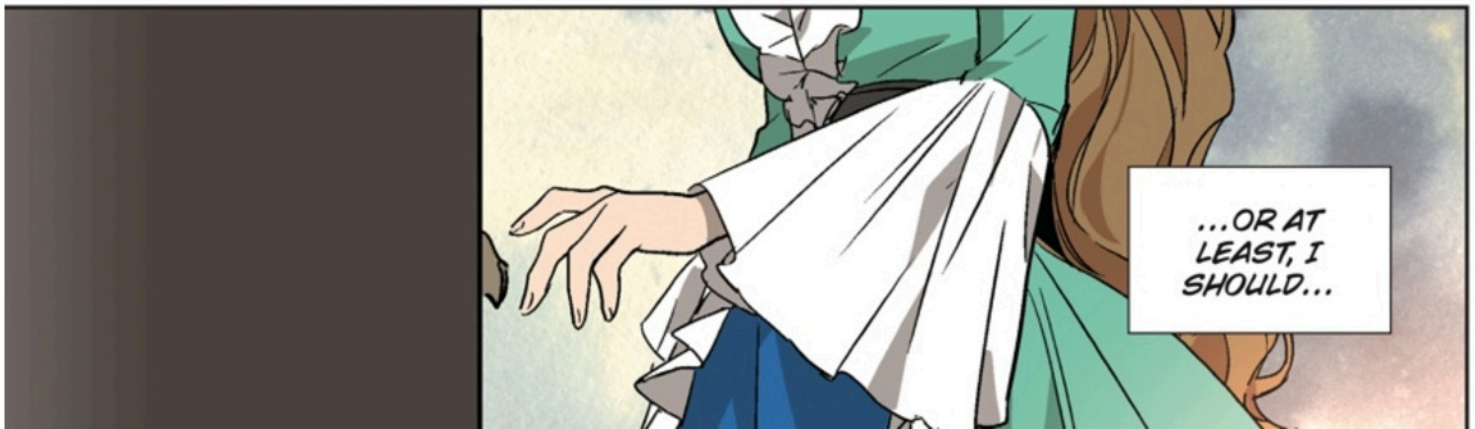

TWITCH
NO, DON'T REACT...
HE'S JUST TRYING TO FEEL ME OUT.
I ALSO KNOW THAT YOUR FAMILIAL CEMETERY SITS AT 31 VANGELIO STREET.
AND WITHIN THERE LIES THE GRAVE OF THE LATE ROBERT WYNKNIGHT, YOUR BROTHER.


IT'S BURIED THERE, IS IT NOT?
I CAN'T LISTEN TO THIS ANY LONGER. LEAVE AT ONCE.


WAIT, REALLY? EVEN WITH ALL THAT...
...HE'S JUST SENDING ME OFF?


HE THINKS I'LL GO DOWN THAT EASY?
TILT
WELL, IF YOU CAN'T LISTEN, THEN I'LL BE ON MY WAY.
HE'S PUTTING UP A FRONT. I SAW HOW HE REACTED WHEN I TALKED ABOUT THE SEAL.
IT'S JUST HIM TRYING TO GET THE UPPER HAND BEFORE SIGNING THE CONTRACT.
FWIP

I HAVE TO PLAY IT COOL.

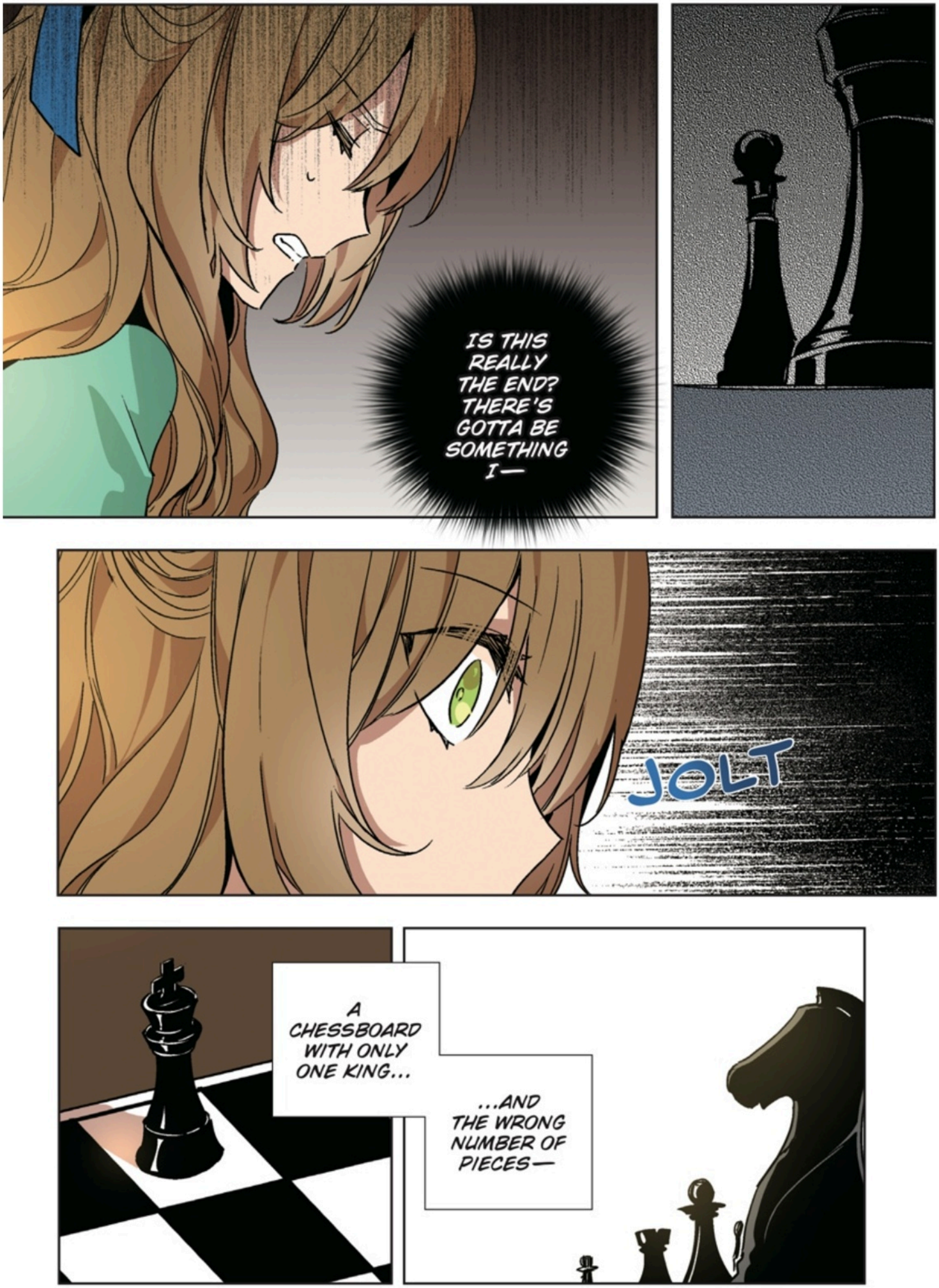

...OR AT LEAST, I SHOULD...

...BUT REALLY, I DON'T HAVE MANY OPTIONS.
BECAUSE THE INFORMATION I DO HAVE... PEOPLE COULD EASILY DISMISS AS A CONSPIRACY.

COME ON...CALL OUT TO ME.

KER-CHAK

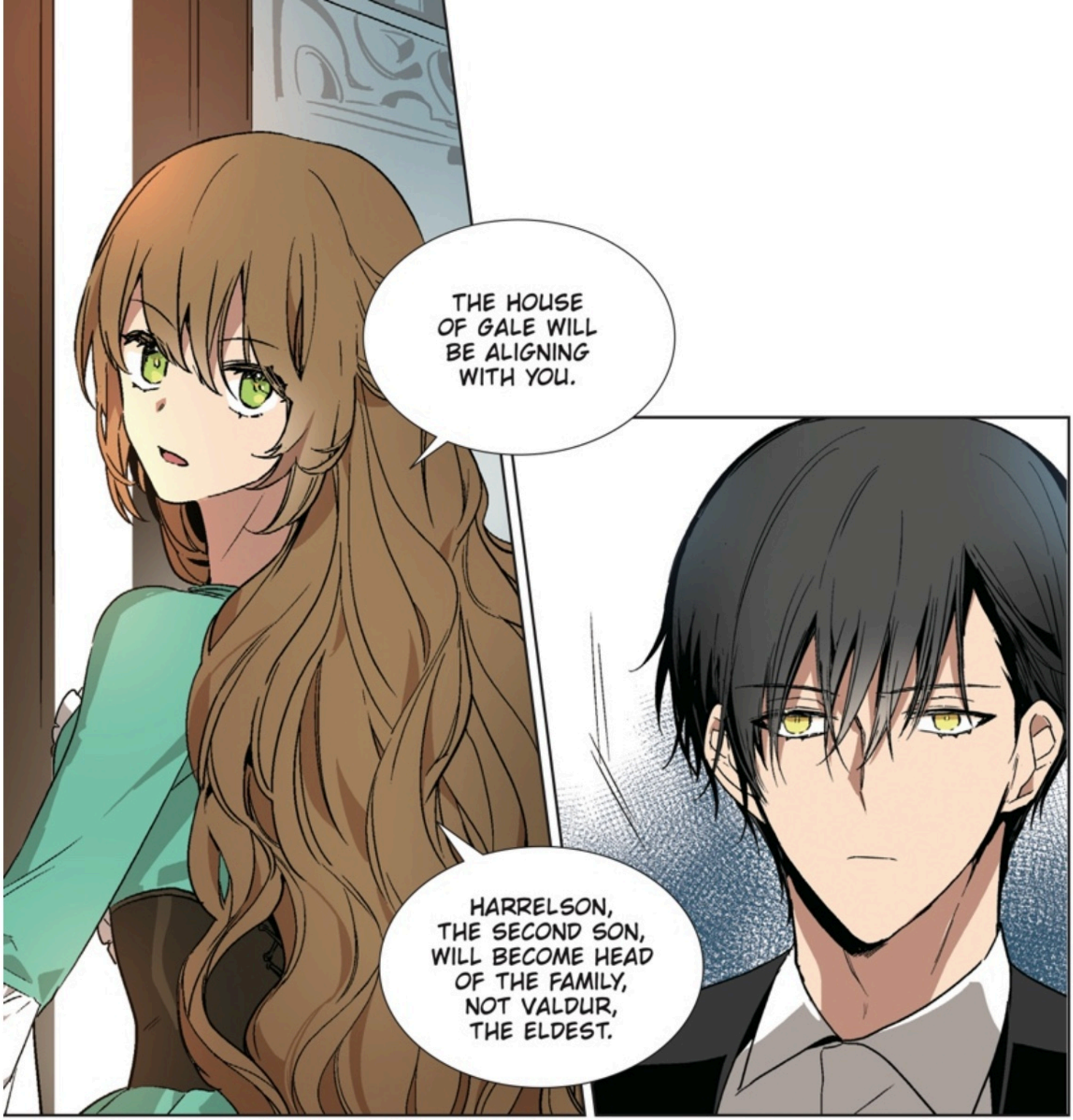
STOP ME!
CREEEEAK

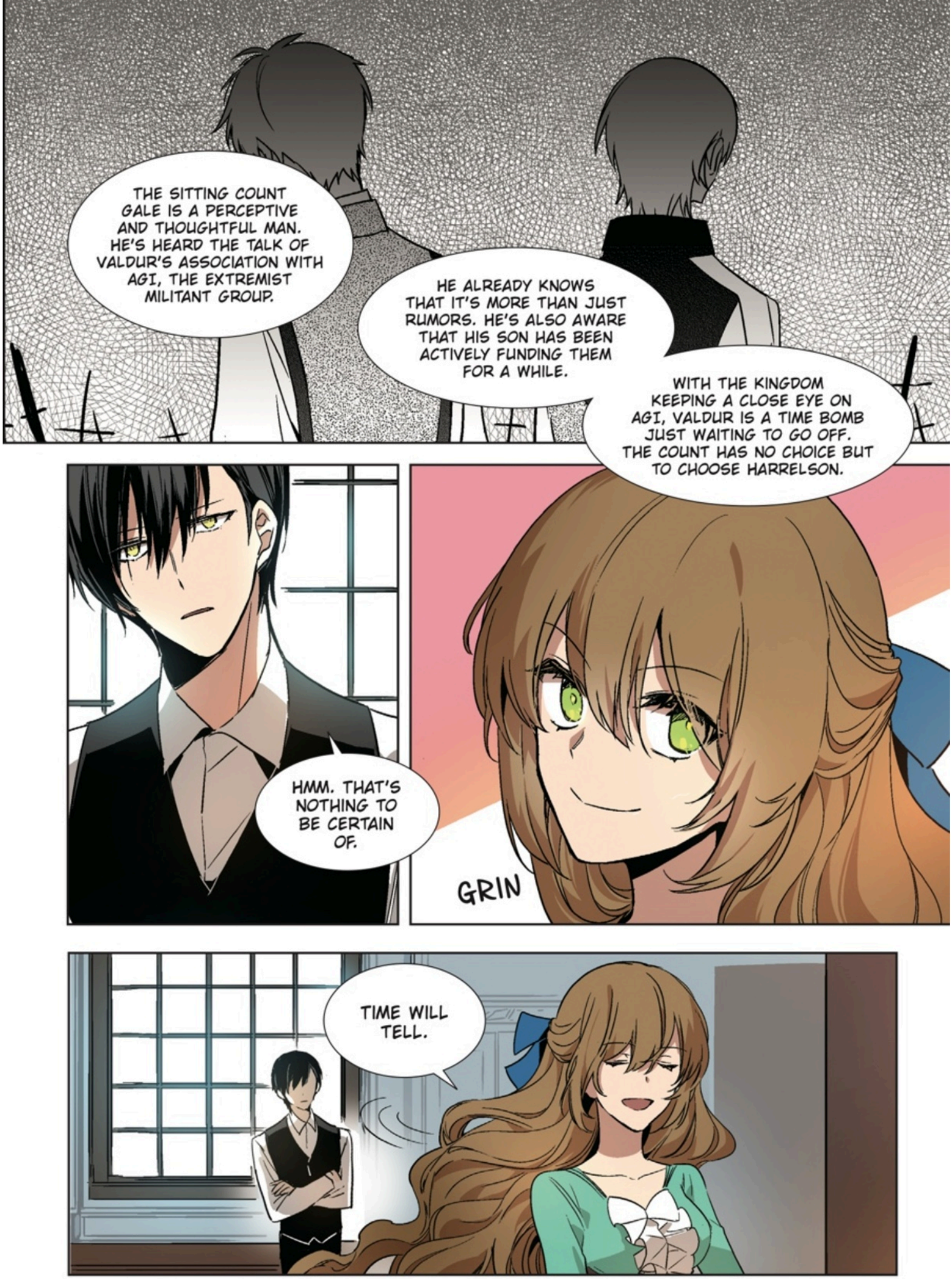

IS THIS REALLY THE END? THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING I—
JOLT
A CHESSBOARD WITH ONLY ONE KING...
...AND THE WRONG NUMBER OF PIECES—

THE BISHOP THERE—

MOVE IT TO THE RIGHT.

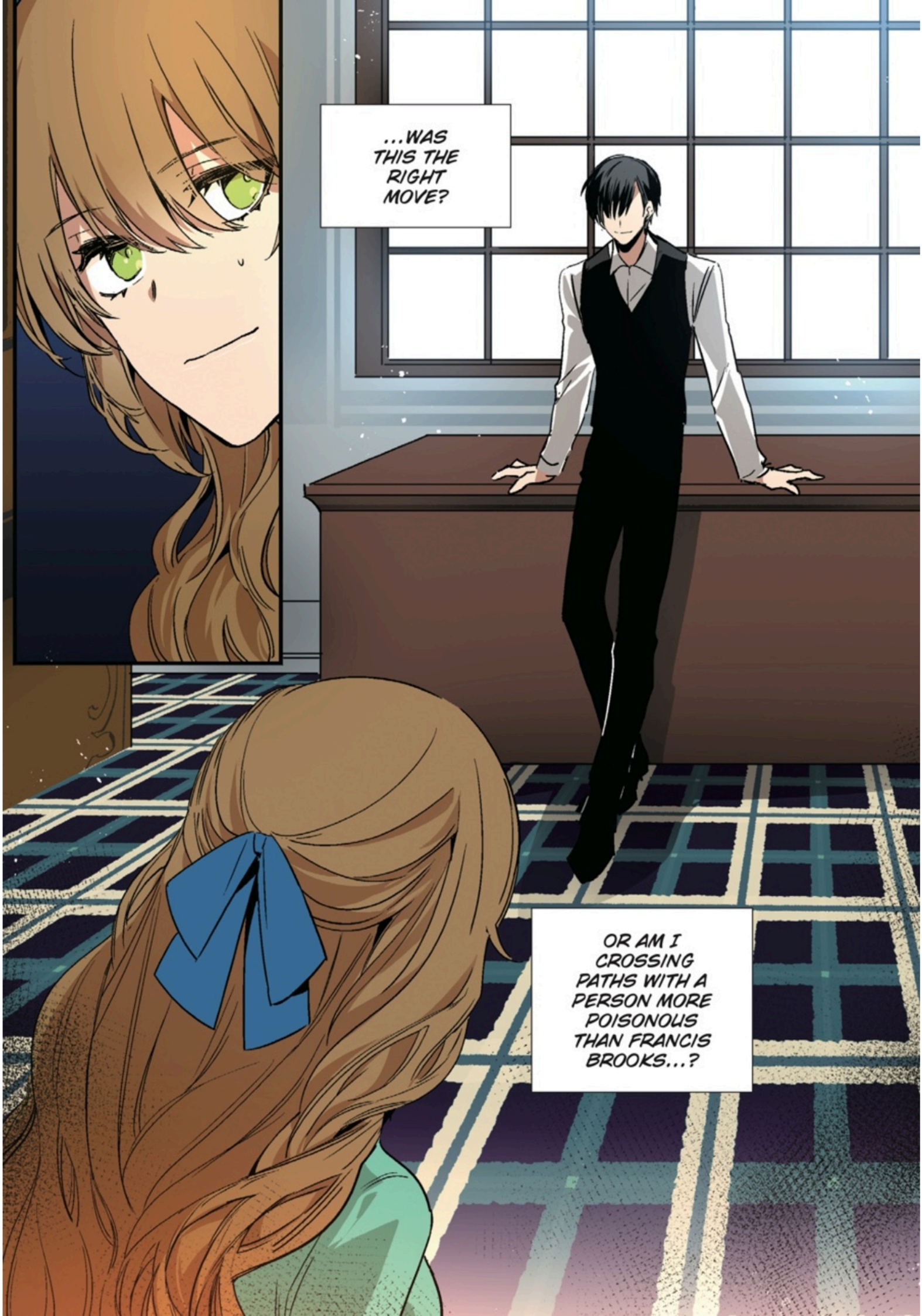
IT MODELS THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE KINGDOM OF CHAMUS.


THE HOUSE OF GALE WILL BE ALIGNING WITH YOU.
HARRELSON, THE SECOND SON, WILL BECOME HEAD OF THE FAMILY, NOT VALDUR, THE ELDEST.

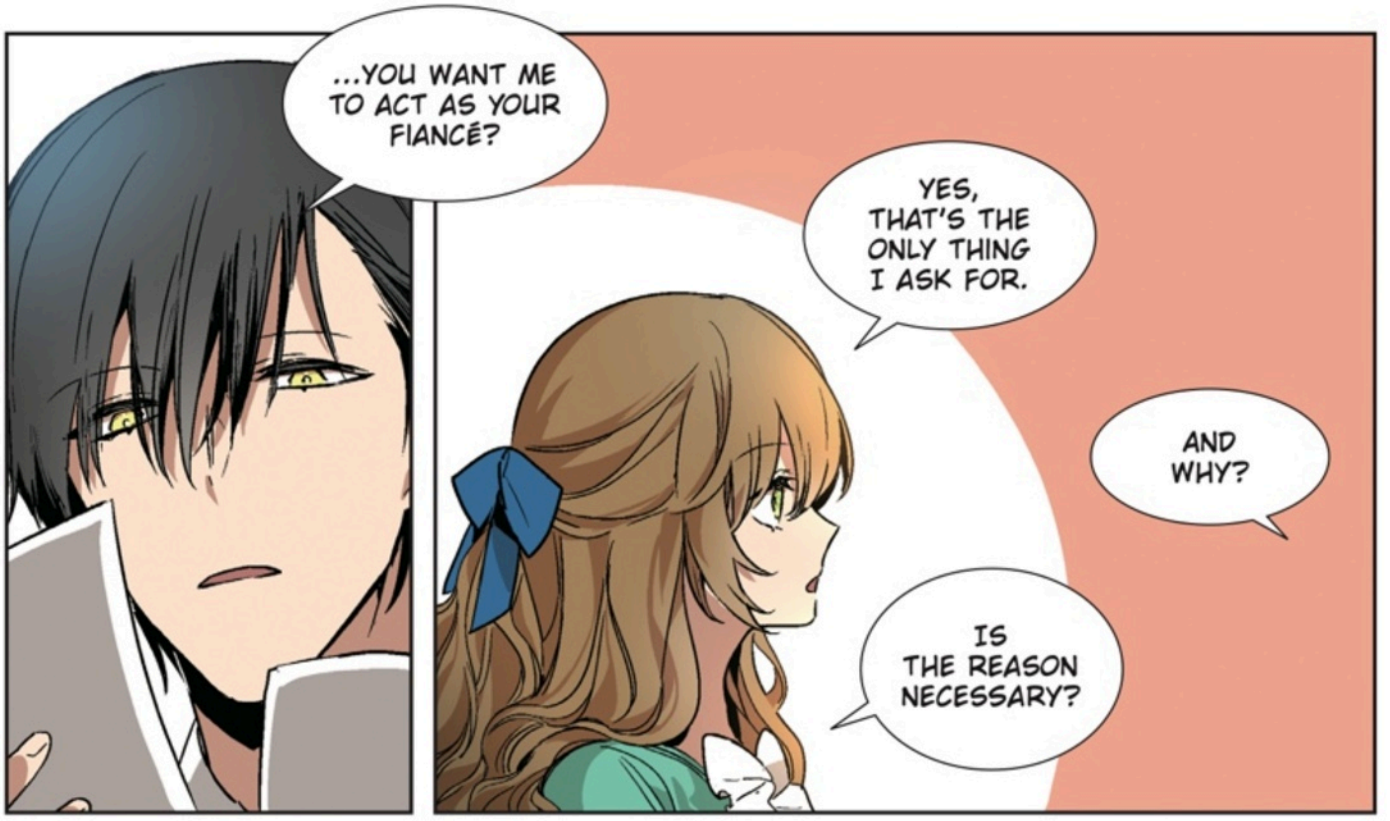

THE SITTING COUNT GALE IS A PERCEPTIVE AND THOUGHTFUL MAN. HE'S HEARD THE TALK OF VALDUR'S ASSOCIATION WITH AGI, THE EXTREMIST MILITANT GROUP.
HE ALREADY KNOWS THAT IT'S MORE THAN JUST RUMORS. HE'S ALSO AWARE THAT HIS SON HAS BEEN ACTIVELY FUNDING THEM FOR A WHILE.
WITH THE KINGDOM KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON AGI, VALDUR IS A TIME BOMB JUST WAITING TO GO OFF. THE COUNT HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO CHOOSE HARRELSON.
HMM. THAT'S NOTHING TO BE CERTAIN OF.
GRIN
TIME WILL TELL.

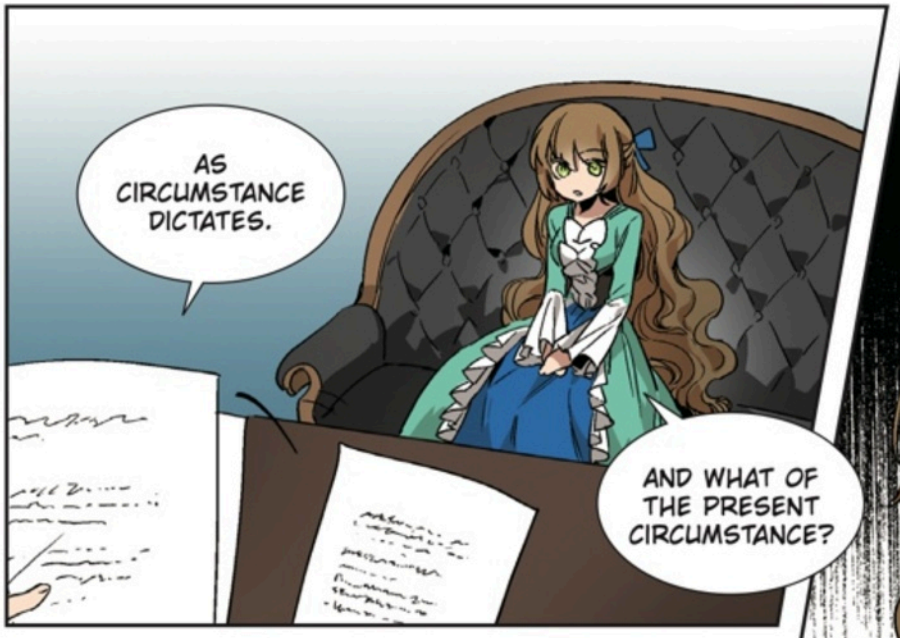
WAIT.

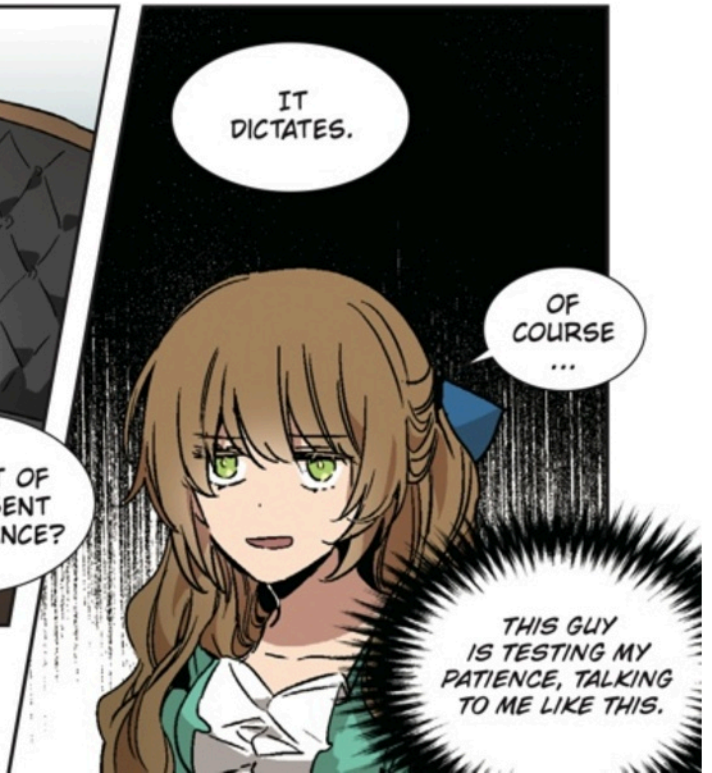
LET'S MAKE...
...A DEAL.

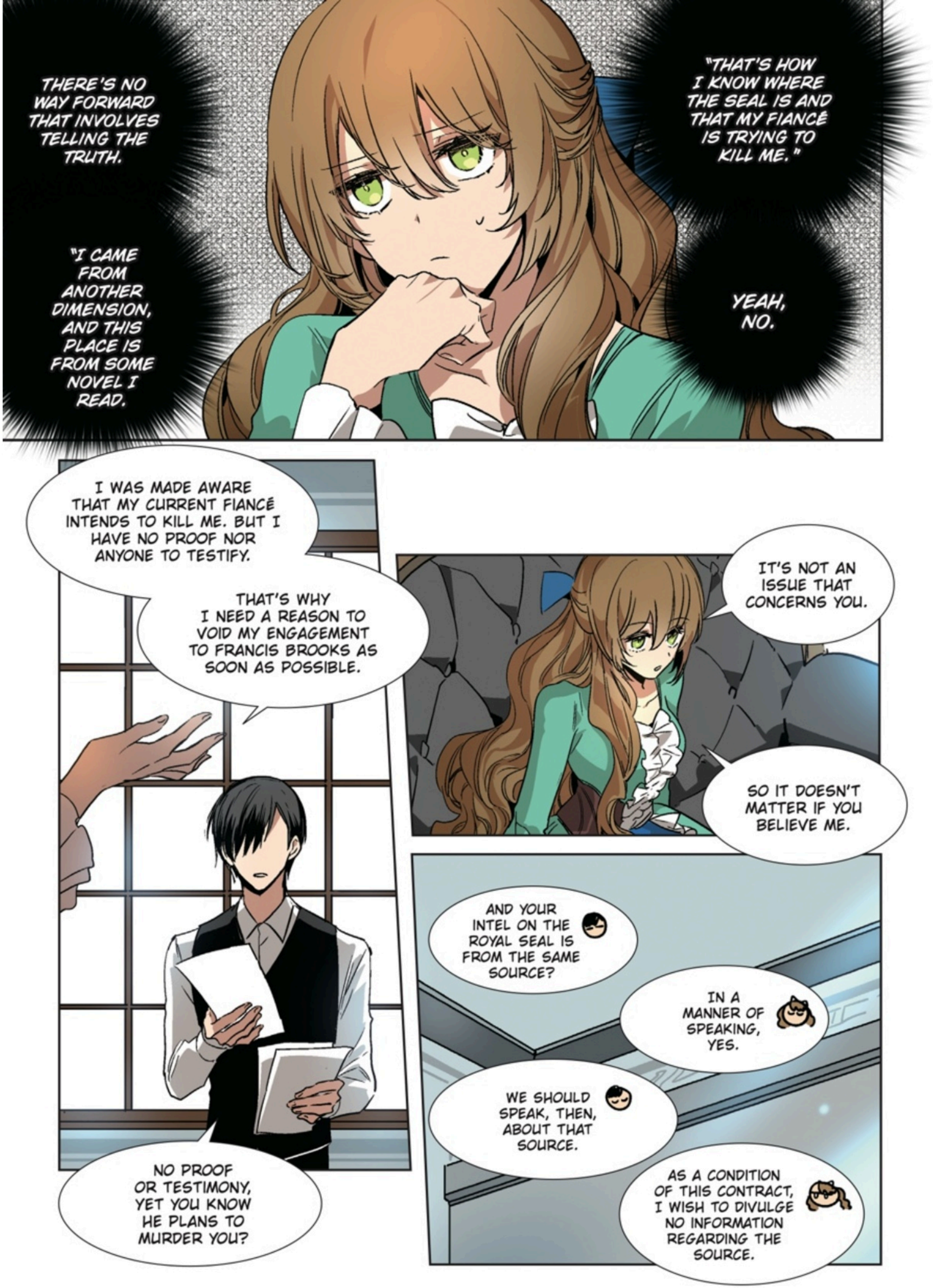

...WAS THIS THE RIGHT MOVE?
OR AM I CROSSING PATHS WITH A PERSON MORE POISONOUS THAN FRANCIS BROOKS...?

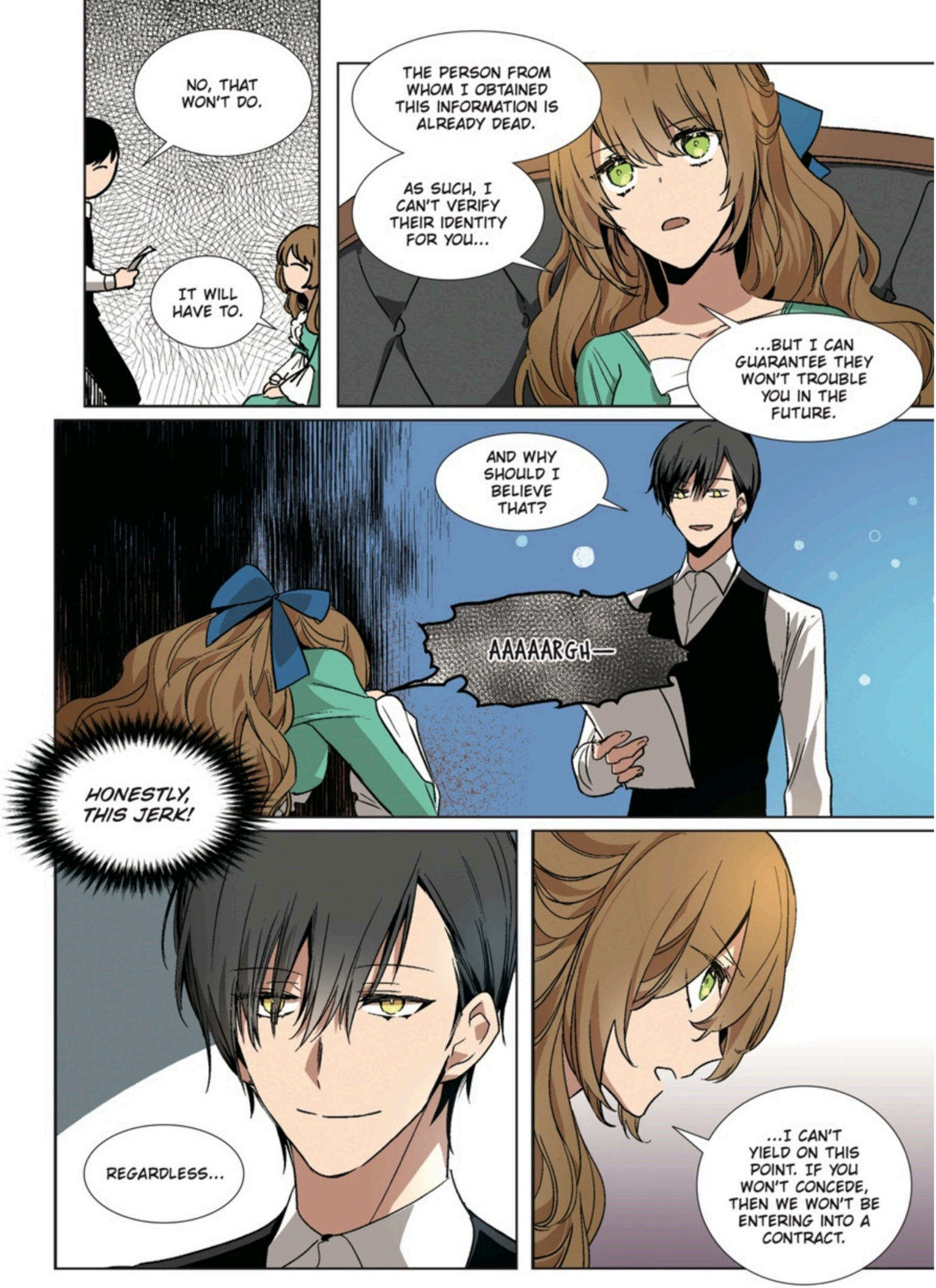
SO...
FLIP


...YOU WANT ME TO ACT AS YOUR FIANCÉ?
YES, THAT'S THE ONLY THING I ASK FOR.
AND WHY?
IS THE REASON NECESSARY?


AS CIRCUMSTANCE DICTATES.
AND WHAT OF THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCE?


IT DICTATES.
OF COURSE ...
THIS GUY IS TESTING MY PATIENCE, TALKING TO ME LIKE THIS.

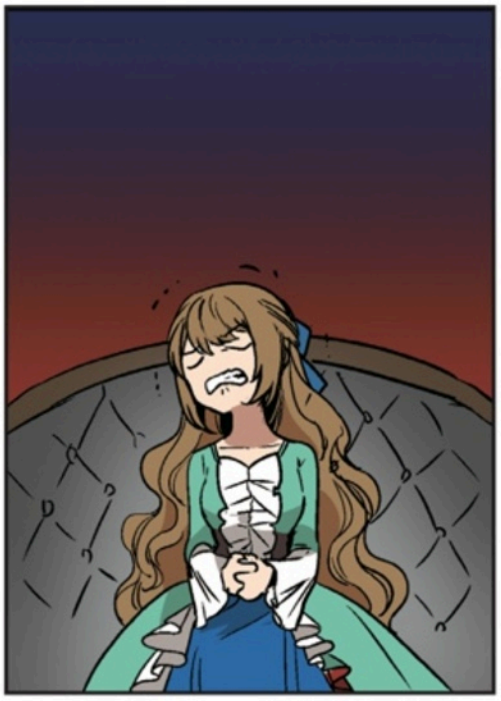

THERE'S NO WAY FORWARD THAT INVOLVES TELLING THE TRUTH.
"I CAME FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION, AND THIS PLACE IS FROM SOME NOVEL I READ.
"THAT'S HOW I KNOW WHERE THE SEAL IS AND THAT MY FIANCÉ IS TRYING TO KILL ME."
YEAH, NO.
I WAS MADE AWARE THAT MY CURRENT FIANCÉ INTENDS TO KILL ME. BUT I HAVE NO PROOF NOR ANYONE TO TESTIFY.
THAT'S WHY I NEED A REASON TO VOID MY ENGAGEMENT TO FRANCIS BROOKS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
NO PROOF OR TESTIMONY, YET YOU KNOW HE PLANS TO MURDER YOU?
IT'S NOT AN ISSUE THAT CONCERNS YOU.
SO IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU BELIEVE ME.
AND YOUR INTEL ON THE ROYAL SEAL IS FROM THE SAME SOURCE?
IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING, YES.
WE SHOULD SPEAK, THEN, ABOUT THAT SOURCE.
AS A CONDITION OF THIS CONTRACT, I WISH TO DIVULGE NO INFORMATION REGARDING THE SOURCE.

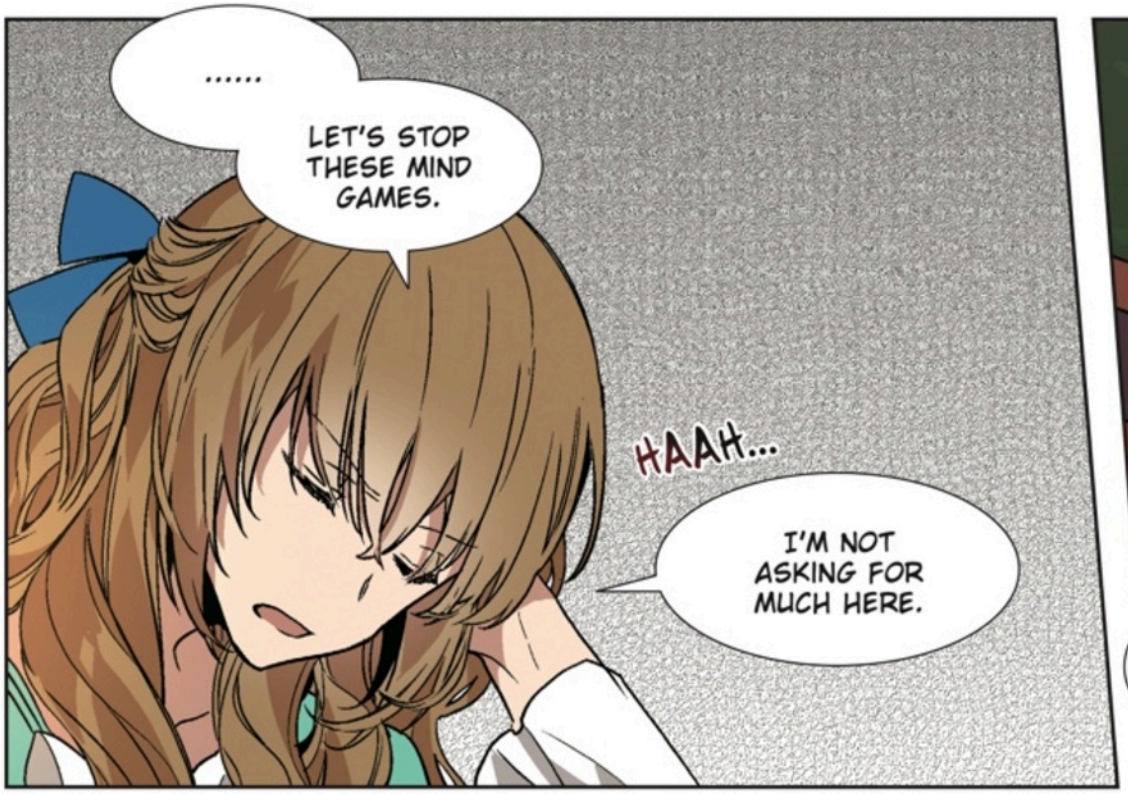

NO, THAT WON'T DO.
IT WILL HAVE TO.
THE PERSON FROM WHOM I OBTAINED THIS INFORMATION IS ALREADY DEAD.
AS SUCH, I CAN'T VERIFY THEIR IDENTITY FOR YOU...
...BUT I CAN GUARANTEE THEY WON'T TROUBLE YOU IN THE FUTURE.
AND WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE THAT?
AAAAARGH—
HONESTLY, THIS JERK!
REGARDLESS...
...I CAN'T YIELD ON THIS POINT. IF YOU WON'T CONCEDE, THEN WE WON'T BE ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT.

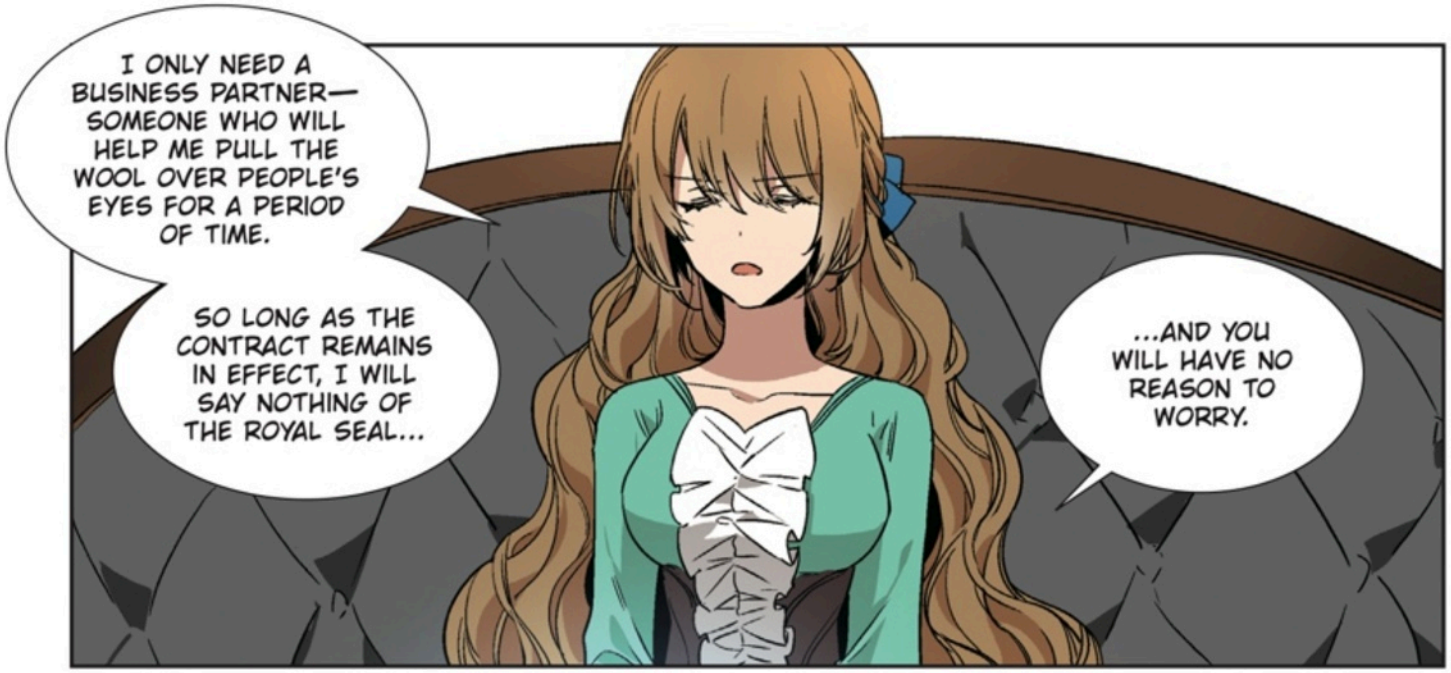
THE INFORMATION I HOLD, AS I'M SURE YOU KNOW, IS QUITE VALUABLE.
THERE ARE NOBLES, NO DOUBT, WHO WOULD WILLINGLY PAY A HIGH PRICE FOR IT.
SOME WOULD EVEN CRAWL ON THEIR HANDS AND KNEES JUST FOR THE CHANCE TO FAULT YOU. EVEN NEWBORNS KNOW THIS.
SMIRK
SMIRK, SMIRK, SMIRK— AGAIN WITH THE SMIRKING!
HAVEN'T YOU COME TO ME...
...BECAUSE YOU THINK THEY WOULDN'T BELIEVE YOU?

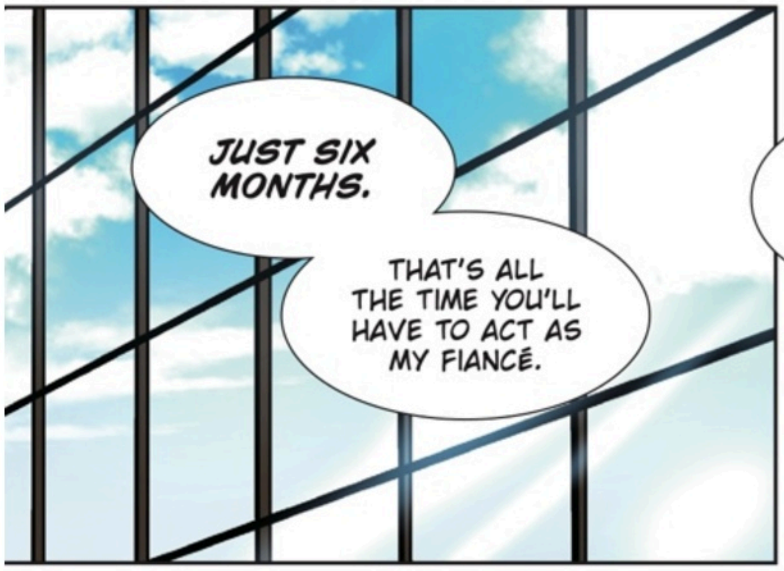
A DAM CAN BE MADE TO FLOOD WITH JUST A SMALL HOLE.

BUT SOME MATTERS SIMPLY DISAPPEAR AS RUMORS.



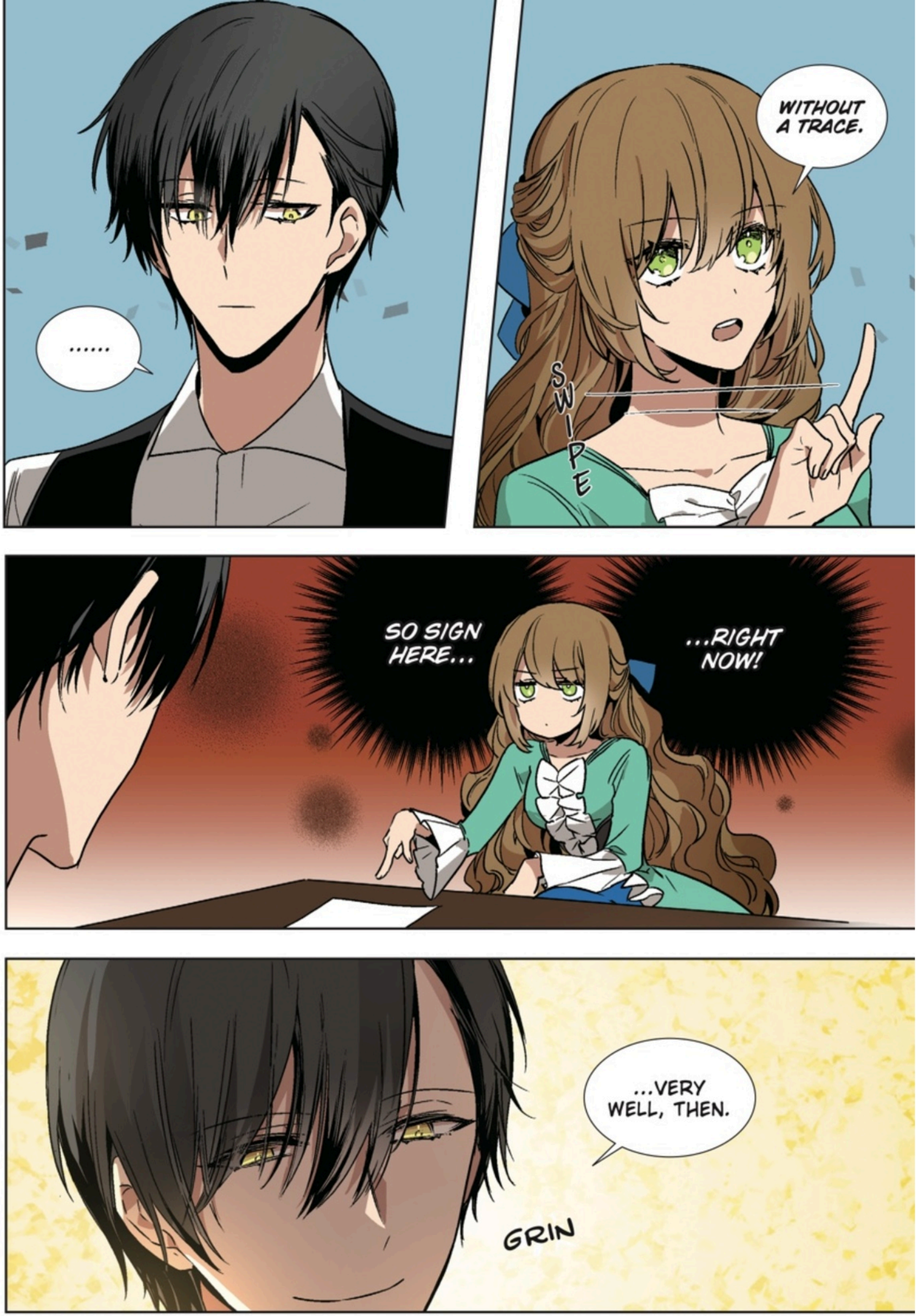


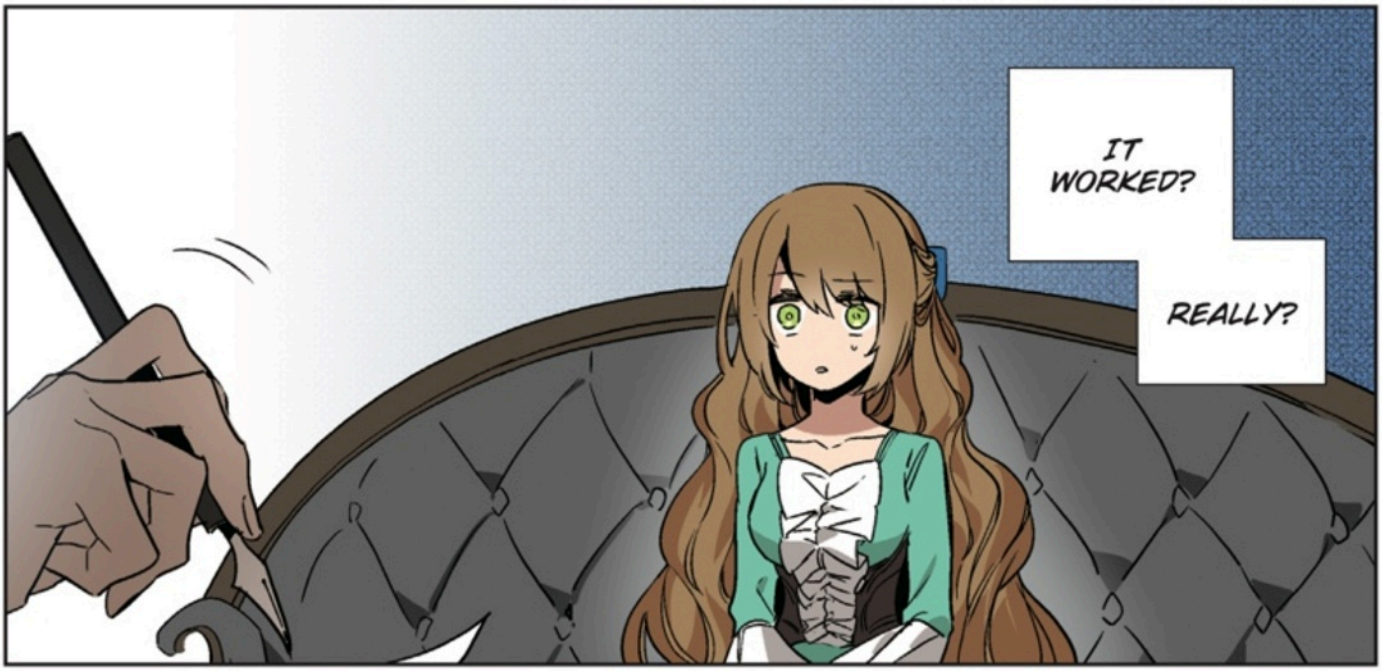

I ONLY NEED A BUSINESS PARTNER— SOMEONE WHO WILL HELP ME PULL THE WOOL OVER PEOPLE'S EYES FOR A PERIOD OF TIME.
SO LONG AS THE CONTRACT REMAINS IN EFFECT, I WILL SAY NOTHING OF THE ROYAL SEAL...
...AND YOU WILL HAVE NO REASON TO WORRY.


JUST SIX MONTHS.
THAT'S ALL THE TIME YOU'LL HAVE TO ACT AS MY FIANCÉ.

AFTER THAT...

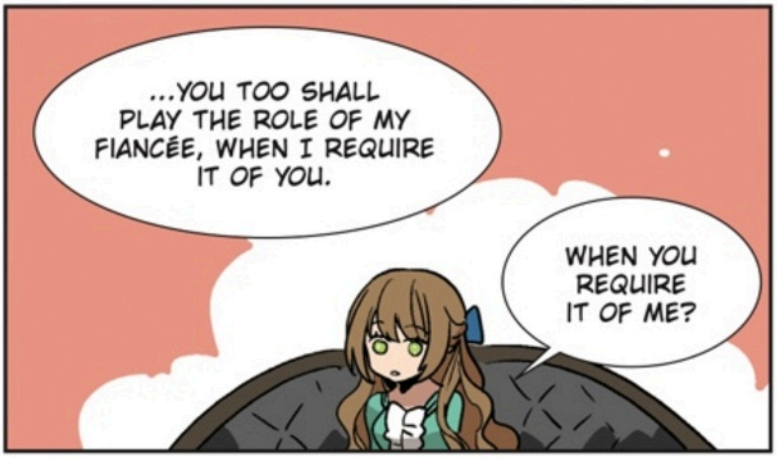
...I'LL DISAPPEAR FROM YOUR LIFE WITHOUT A TRACE.


.....
WITHOUT A TRACE.
SWIPE
SO SIGN HERE...
...RIGHT NOW!
...VERY WELL, THEN.
GRIN

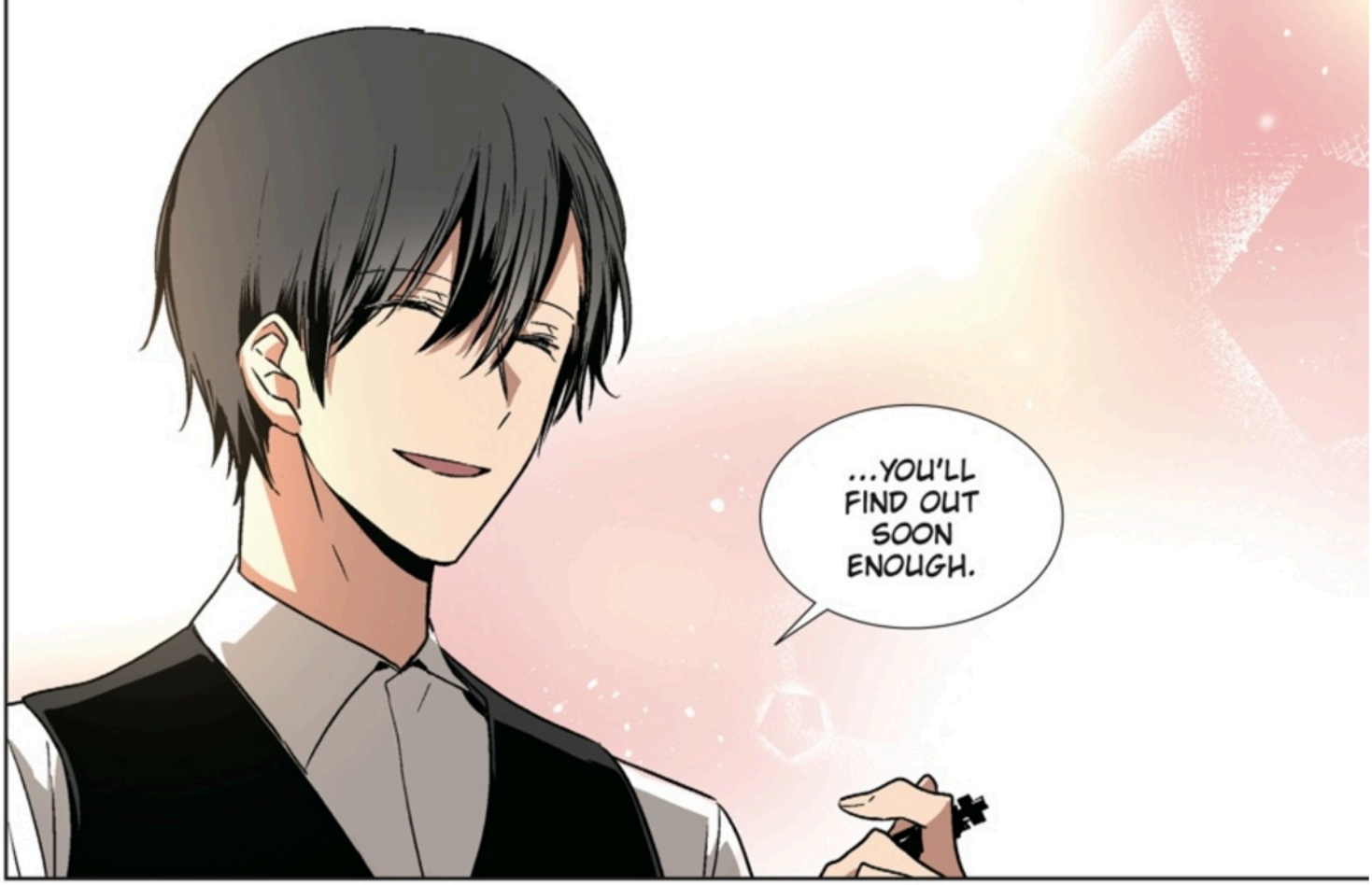

IT WORKED?
REALLY?

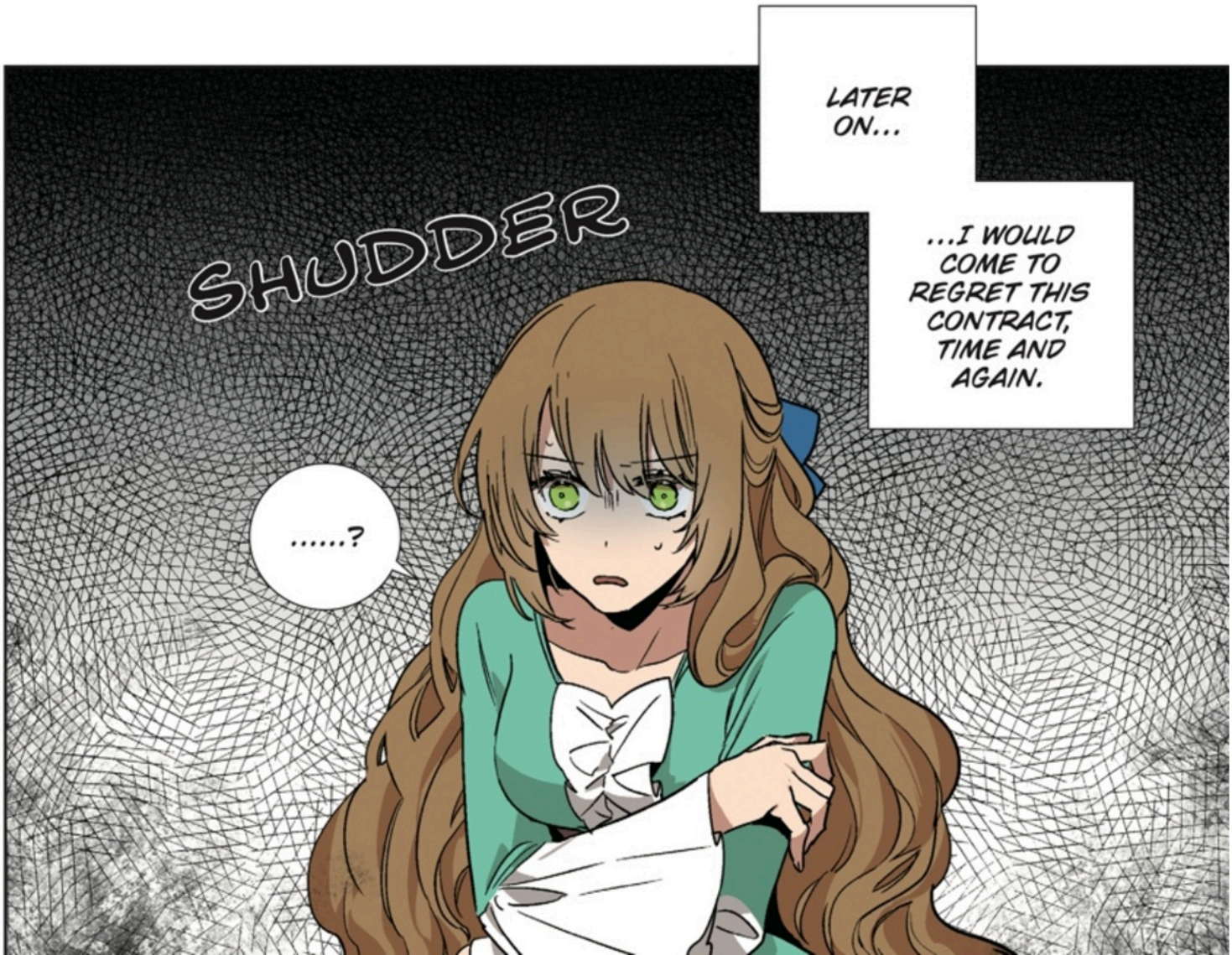
IN EXCHANGE ...

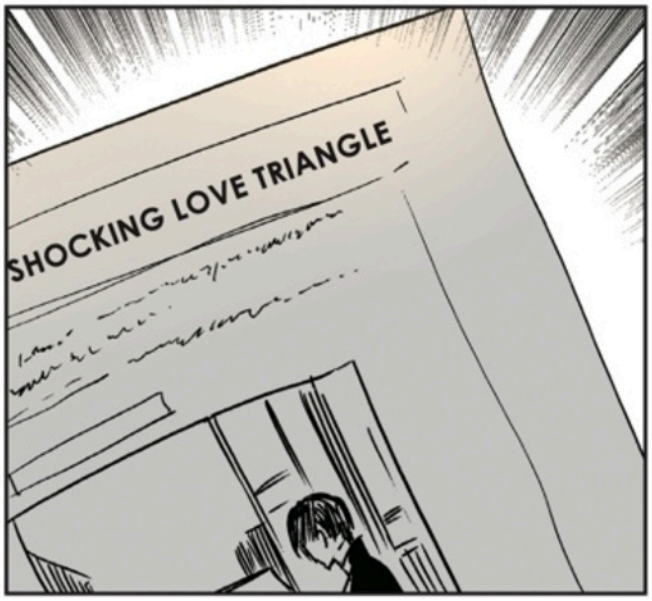
...WHILE ACTING OUT THIS ASININE FARCE...

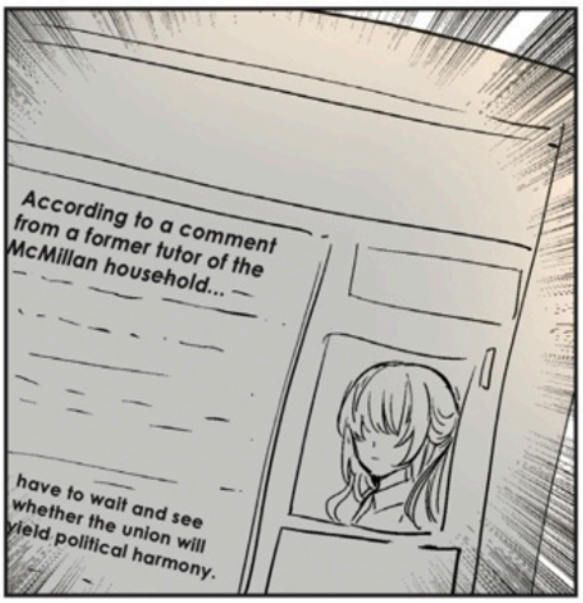

...YOU TOO SHALL PLAY THE ROLE OF MY FIANCÉE, WHEN I REQUIRE IT OF YOU.
WHEN YOU REQUIRE IT OF ME?

SHF
LIKE IT OR NOT...


...YOU'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH.

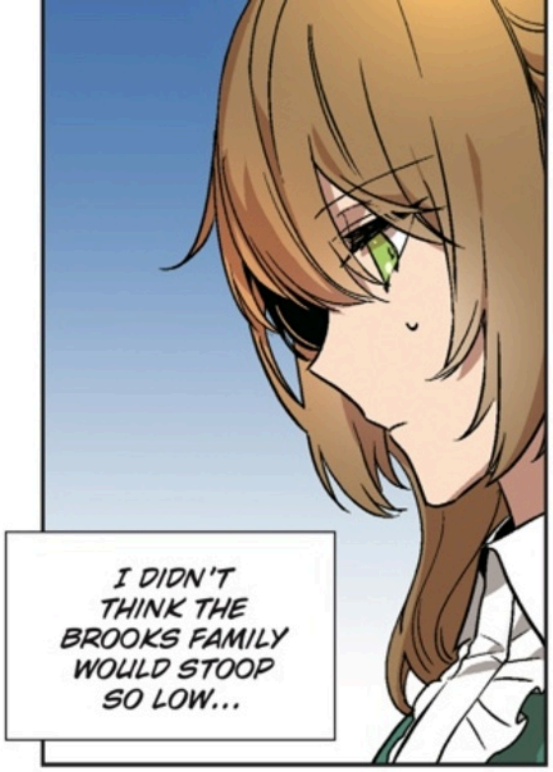

LATER ON...
...I WOULD COME TO REGRET THIS CONTRACT, TIME AND AGAIN.
SHUDDER
.....?

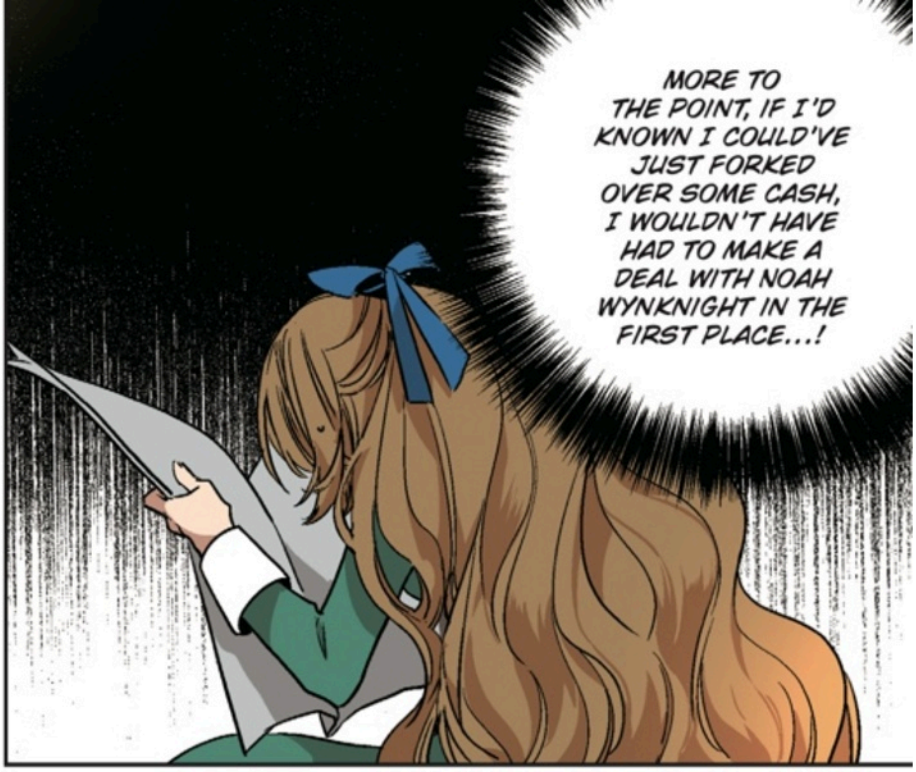

SHOCKING LOVE TRIANGLE


According to a comment from a former tutor of the McMillan household...
have to wait and see whether the union will yield political harmony.

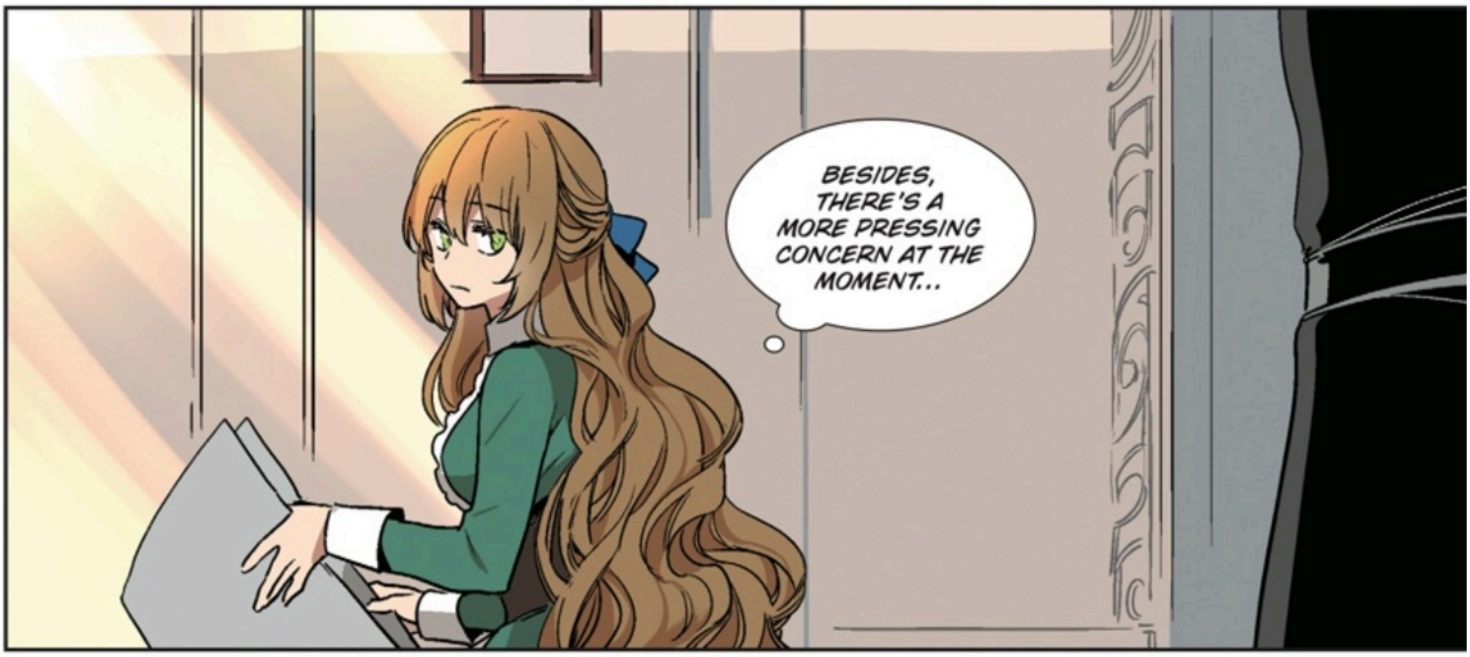
JUST ONE THING AFTER ANOTHER, HUH...

rooks family, citing unilateral cancellation
he engagement, is claiming massive damages
gainst the McMillans. They have declared their
illingness to go to court to collect...
MONETARY COMPENSA-TION...


I DIDN'T THINK THE BROOKS FAMILY WOULD STOOP SO LOW...

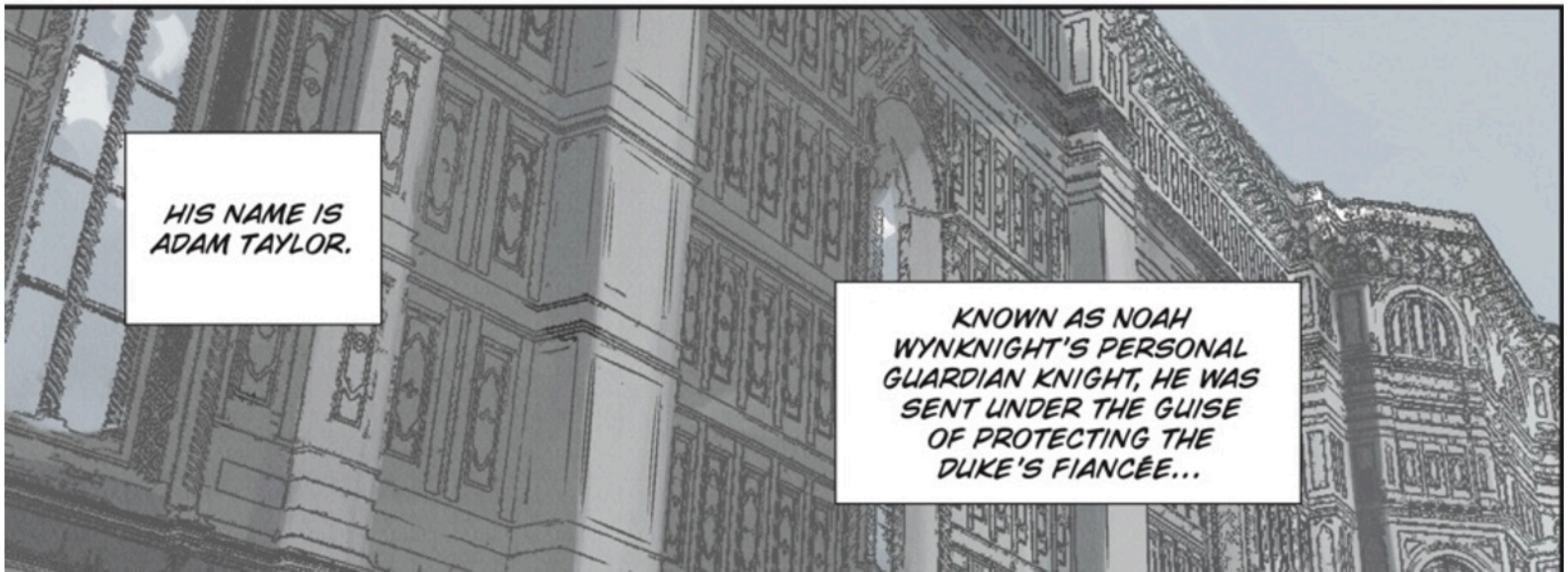

MORE TO THE POINT, IF I'D KNOWN I COULD'VE JUST FORKED OVER SOME CASH, I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO MAKE A DEAL WITH NOAH WYNKNIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE...!

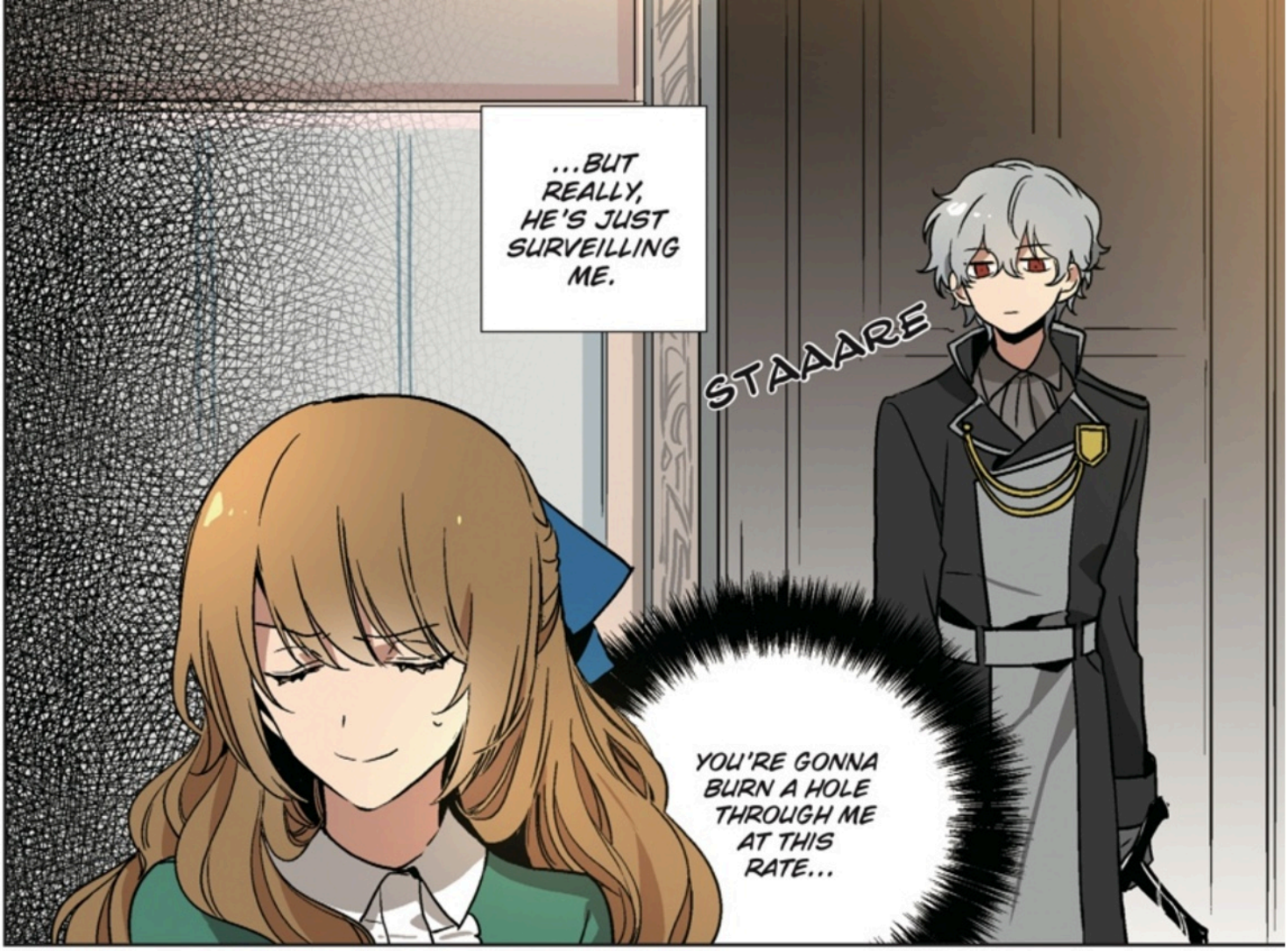
WELL, THE CONTRACT'S BEEN SIGNED NOW. NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT.
UGH...
WHATEVER HAPPENS, I HAVE TO FOLLOW THROUGH.

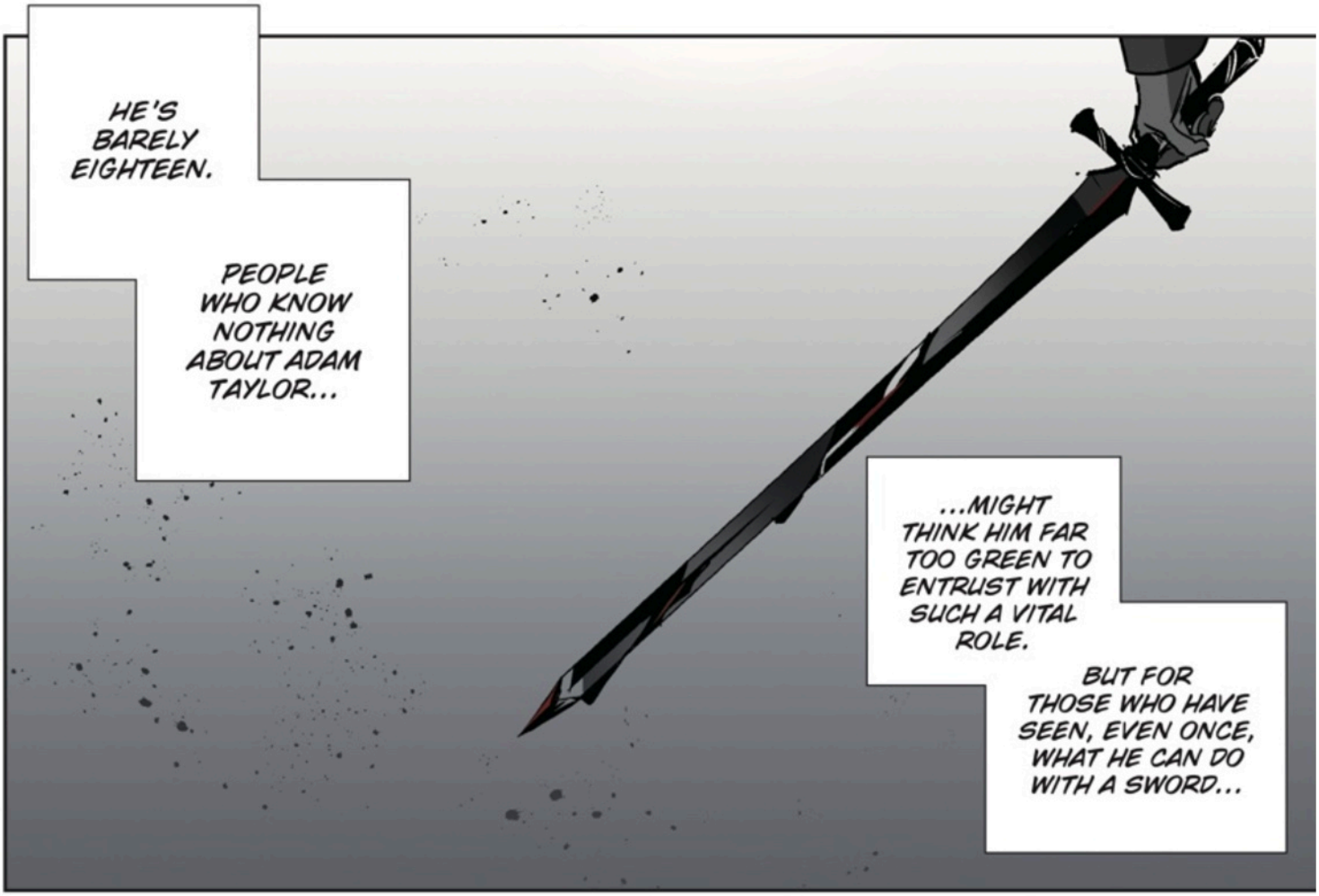

BESIDES, THERE'S A MORE PRESSING CONCERN AT THE MOMENT...

.....?

YEAH, THIS GUY'S AN ISSUE.

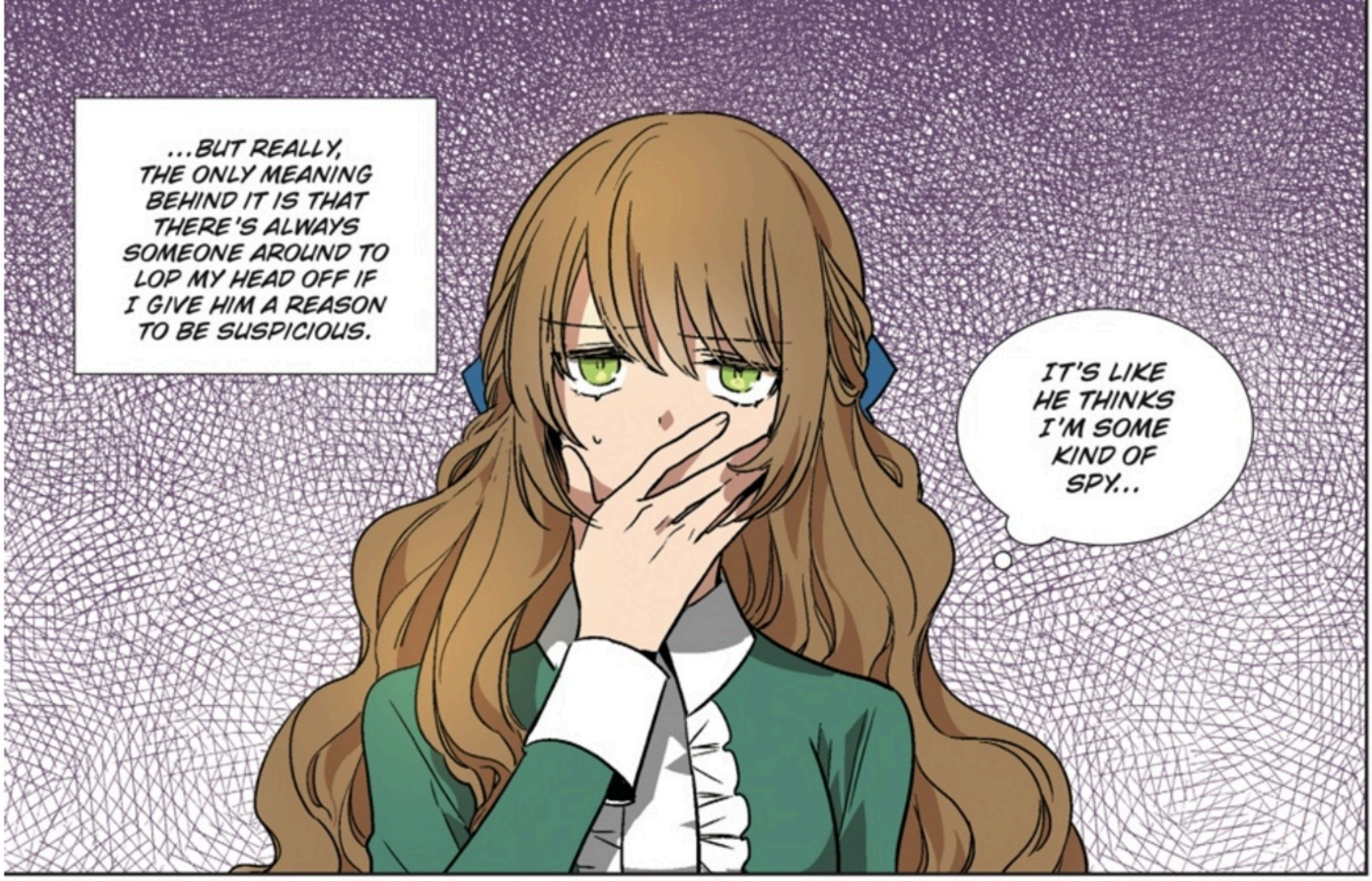

HIS NAME IS ADAM TAYLOR.
KNOWN AS NOAH WYNKNIGHT'S PERSONAL GUARDIAN KNIGHT, HE WAS SENT UNDER THE GUISE OF PROTECTING THE DUKE'S FIANCÊE...


...BUT REALLY, HE'S JUST SURVEILLING ME.
STAAARE
YOU'RE GONNA BURN A HOLE THROUGH ME AT THIS RATE...

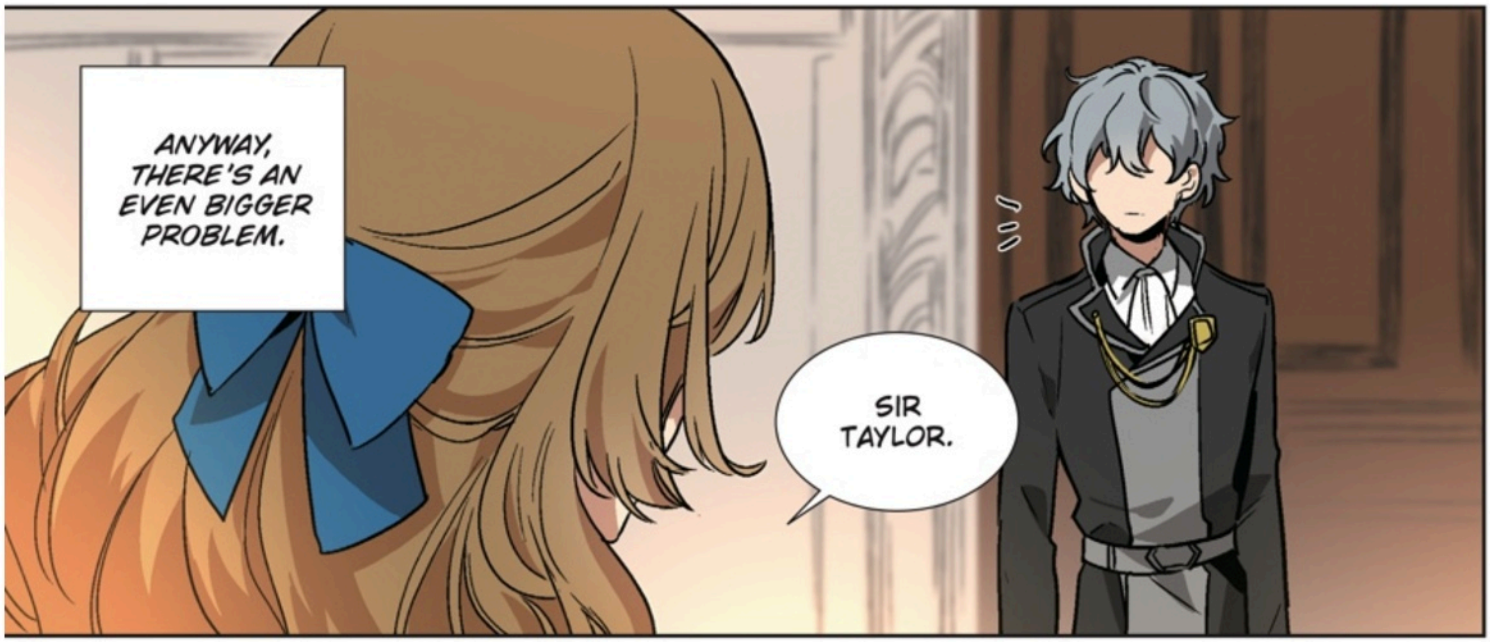

HE'S BARELY EIGHTEEN.
PEOPLE WHO KNOW NOTHING ABOUT ADAM TAYLOR...
...MIGHT THINK HIM FAR TOO GREEN TO ENTRUST WITH SUCH A VITAL ROLE.
BUT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN, EVEN ONCE, WHAT HE CAN DO WITH A SWORD...

...WELL, "GREEN" ISN'T THE WORD THAT COMES TO MIND.

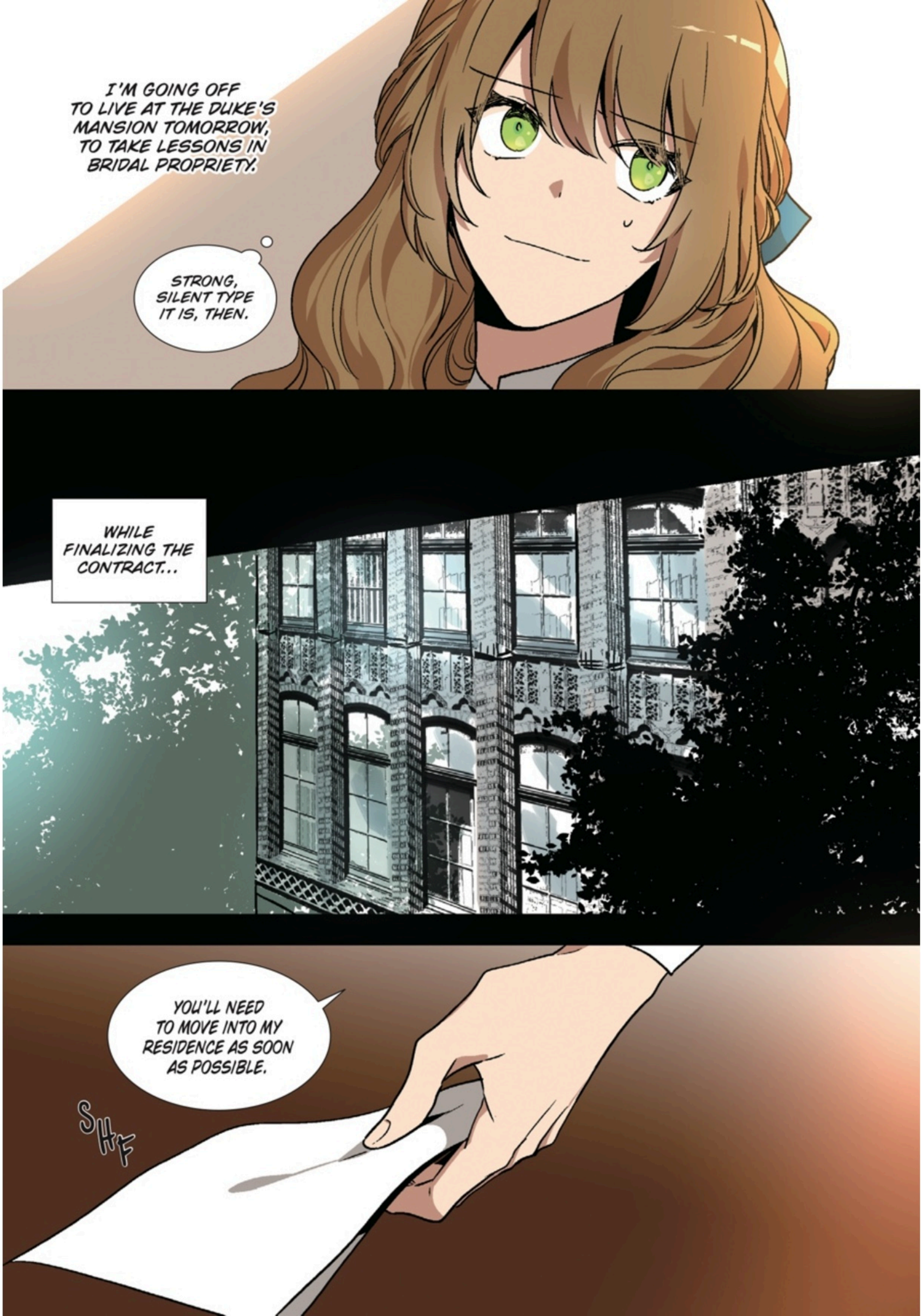
...HAVING RETURNED FROM THE INFAMOUS BATTLE AT HASHLEV VALLEY...
...UNSCATHED AND ALONE.
ONCE THE DRAFTING OF CHILD SOLDIERS WAS ABOLISHED...
...ADAM, ALONG WITH OTHERS WHO HAD NO PLACE TO GO, WAS TAKEN INTO THE WYNKNIGHT HOUSE.
NOW HE SERVES AS A LOYAL KNIGHT OF THE DUKE.
PEOPLE AROUND THE McMILLAN HOUSEHOLD HAVE BEEN TITTERING ABOUT HOW NOAH SENDING SUCH A CLOSE CONFIDANT SHOWS HOW GREAT HIS LOVE MUST BE...

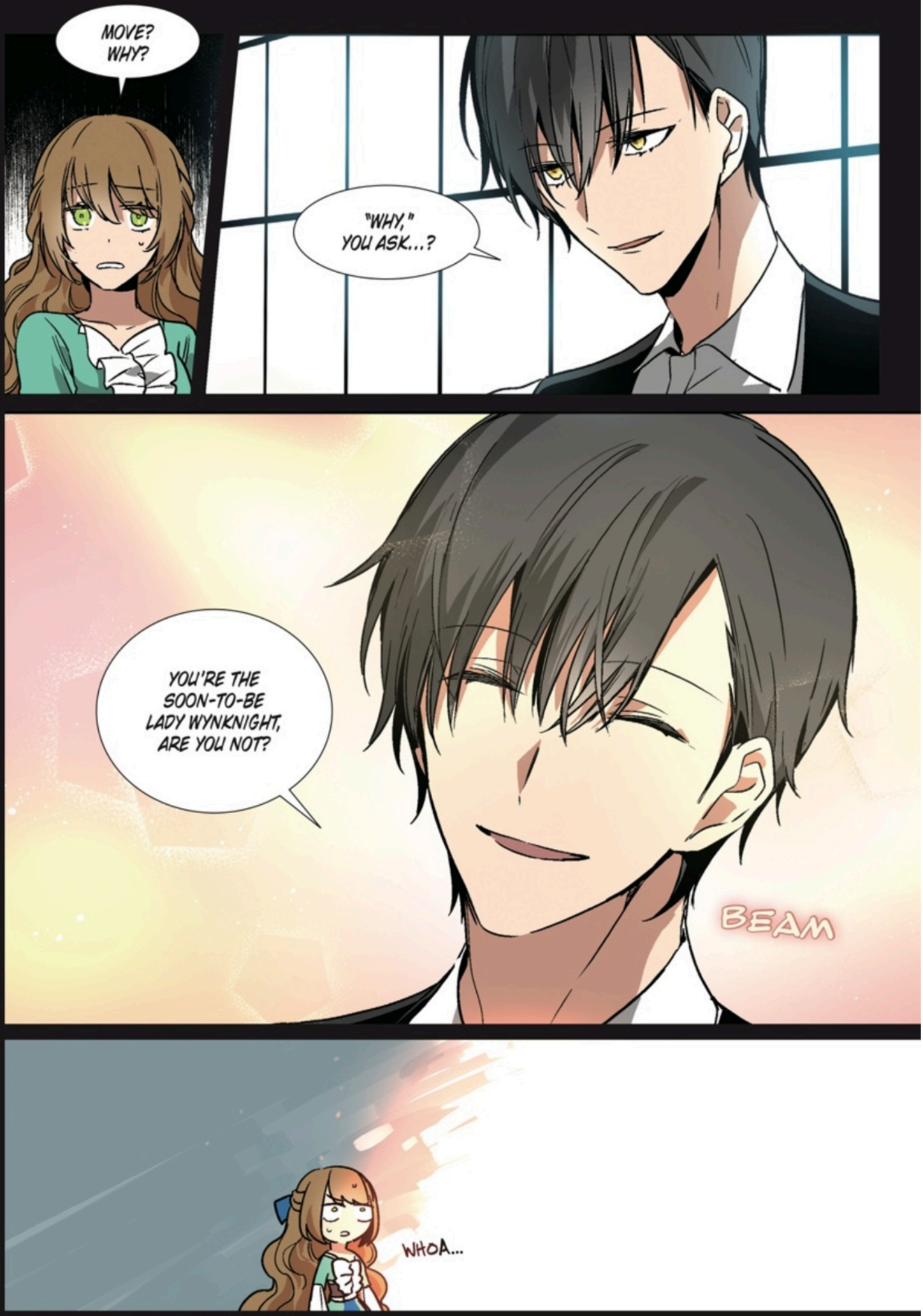

...BUT REALLY, THE ONLY MEANING BEHIND IT IS THAT THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE AROUND TO LOP MY HEAD OFF IF I GIVE HIM A REASON TO BE SUSPICIOUS.
IT'S LIKE HE THINKS I'M SOME KIND OF SPY...

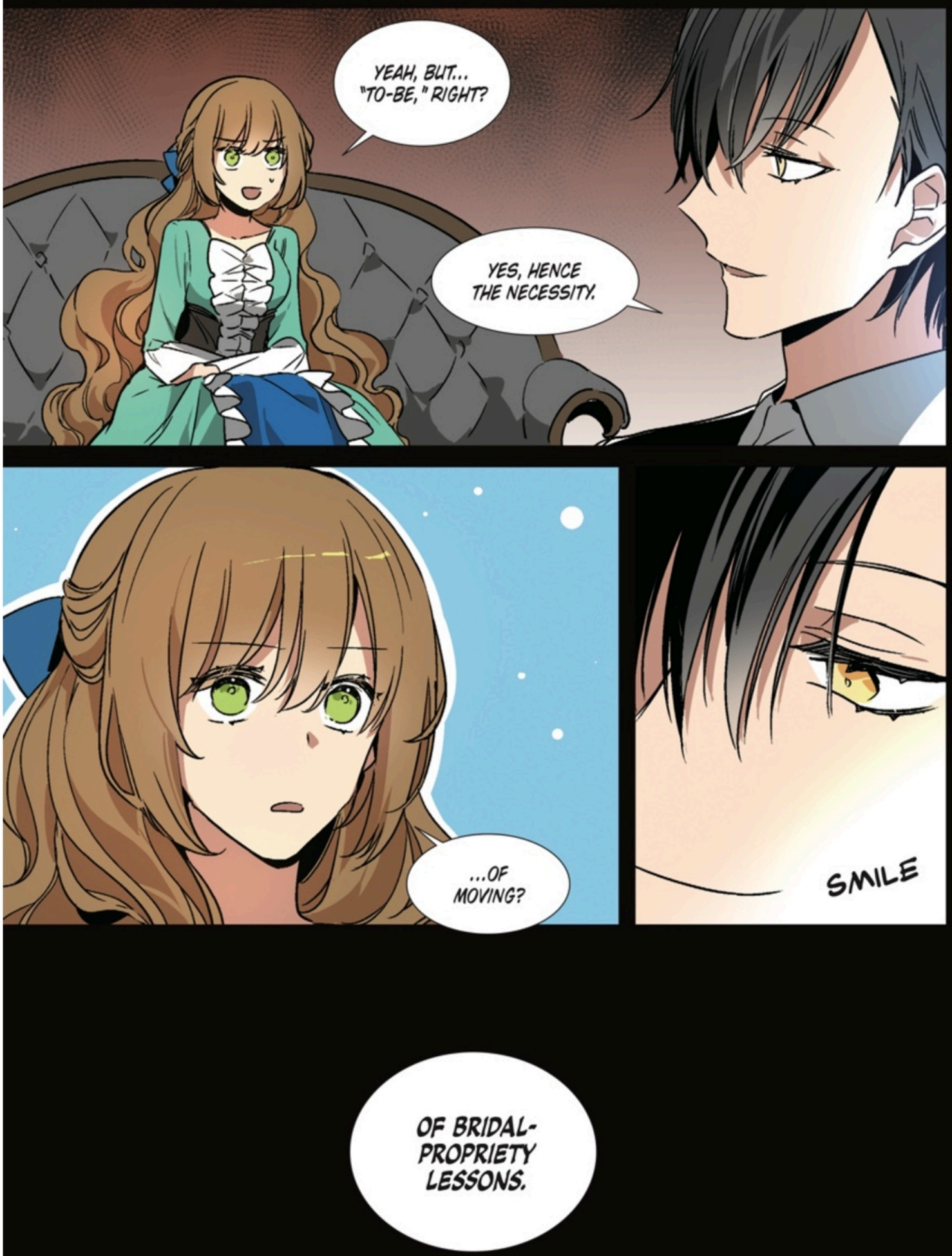
WELL, ACTUALLY...
...YEAH, THAT MAKES SENSE.

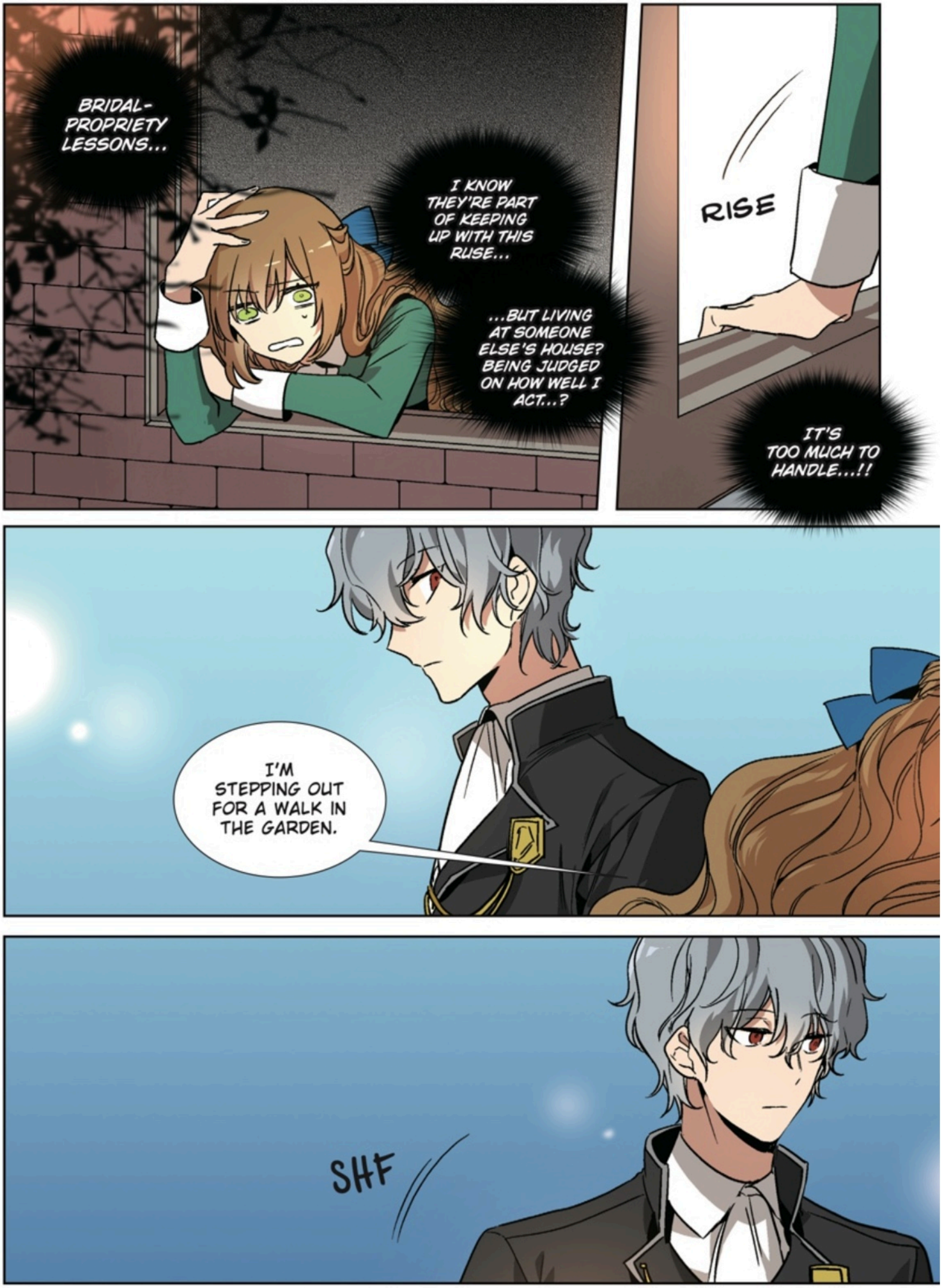

ANYWAY, THERE'S AN EVEN BIGGER PROBLEM.
SIR TAYLOR.

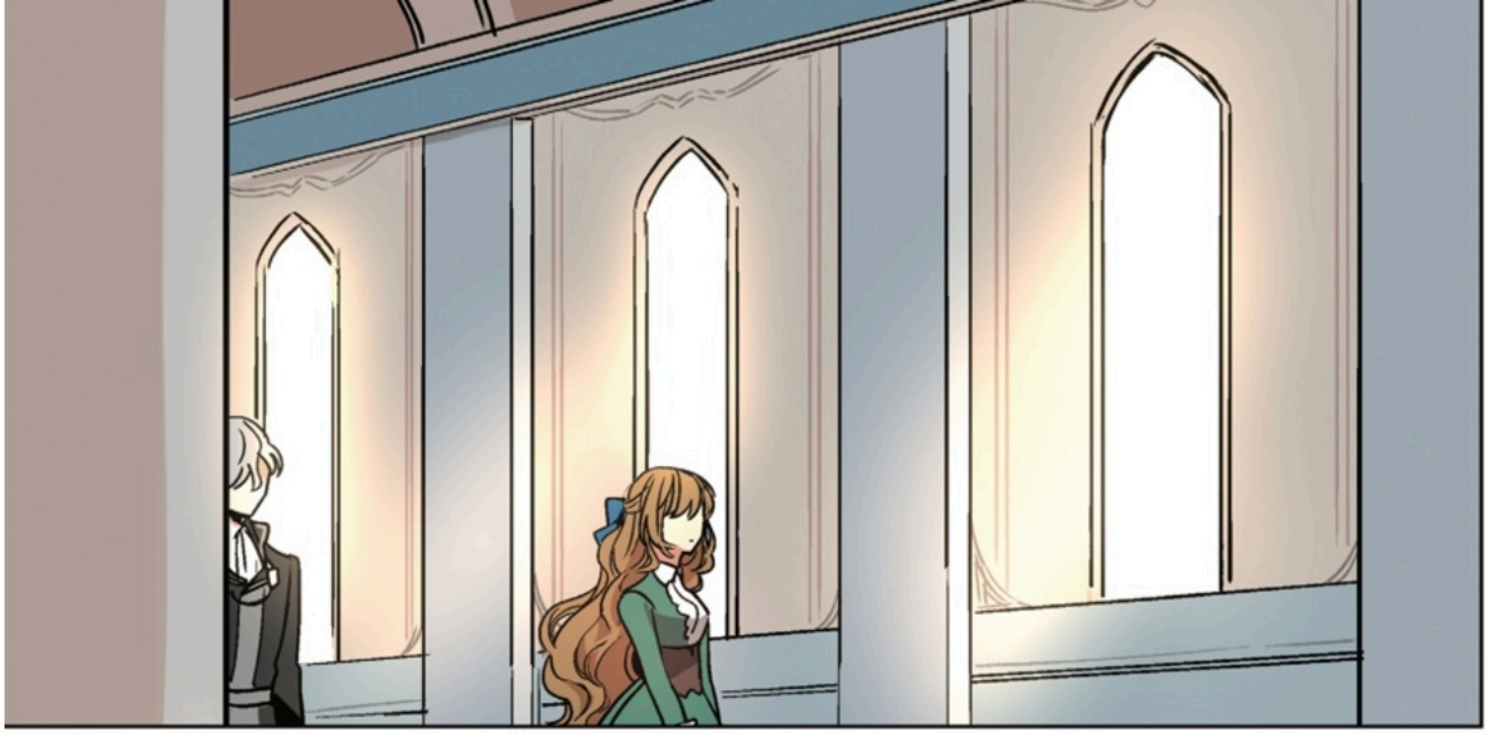
WILL YOU ALSO BE KEEPING WATCH OVER ME ONCE I'VE MOVED TO THE DUKE'S RESIDENCE?
.....
.....
SAY SOMETHING ...
.....
NOD


I'M GOING OFF TO LIVE AT THE DUKE'S MANSION TOMORROW, TO TAKE LESSONS IN BRIDAL PROPRIETY.
STRONG, SILENT TYPE IT IS, THEN.
WHILE FINALIZING THE CONTRACT...
YOU'LL NEED TO MOVE INTO MY RESIDENCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
SHF


MOVE? WHY?
"WHY," YOU ASK...?
YOU'RE THE SOON-TO-BE LADY WYNKNIGHT, ARE YOU NOT?
BEAM
WHOA...

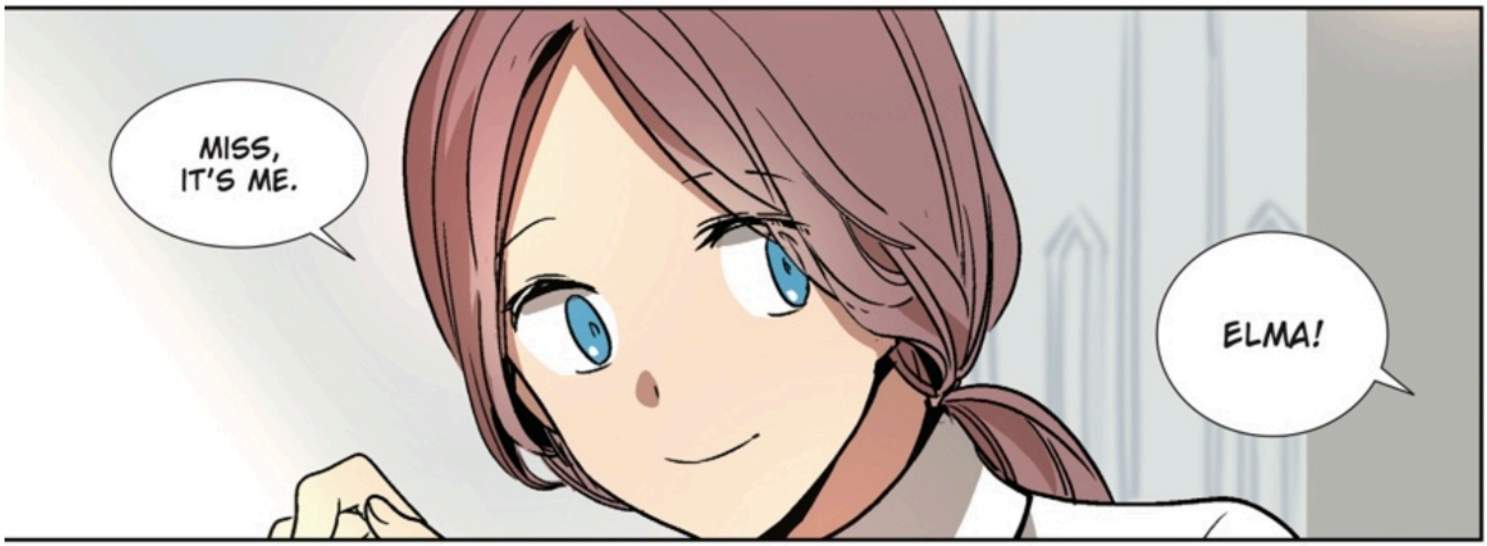

YEAH, BUT... "TO-BE," RIGHT?
YES, HENCE THE NECESSITY.
...OF MOVING?
SMILE
OF BRIDAL-PROPRIETY LESSONS.

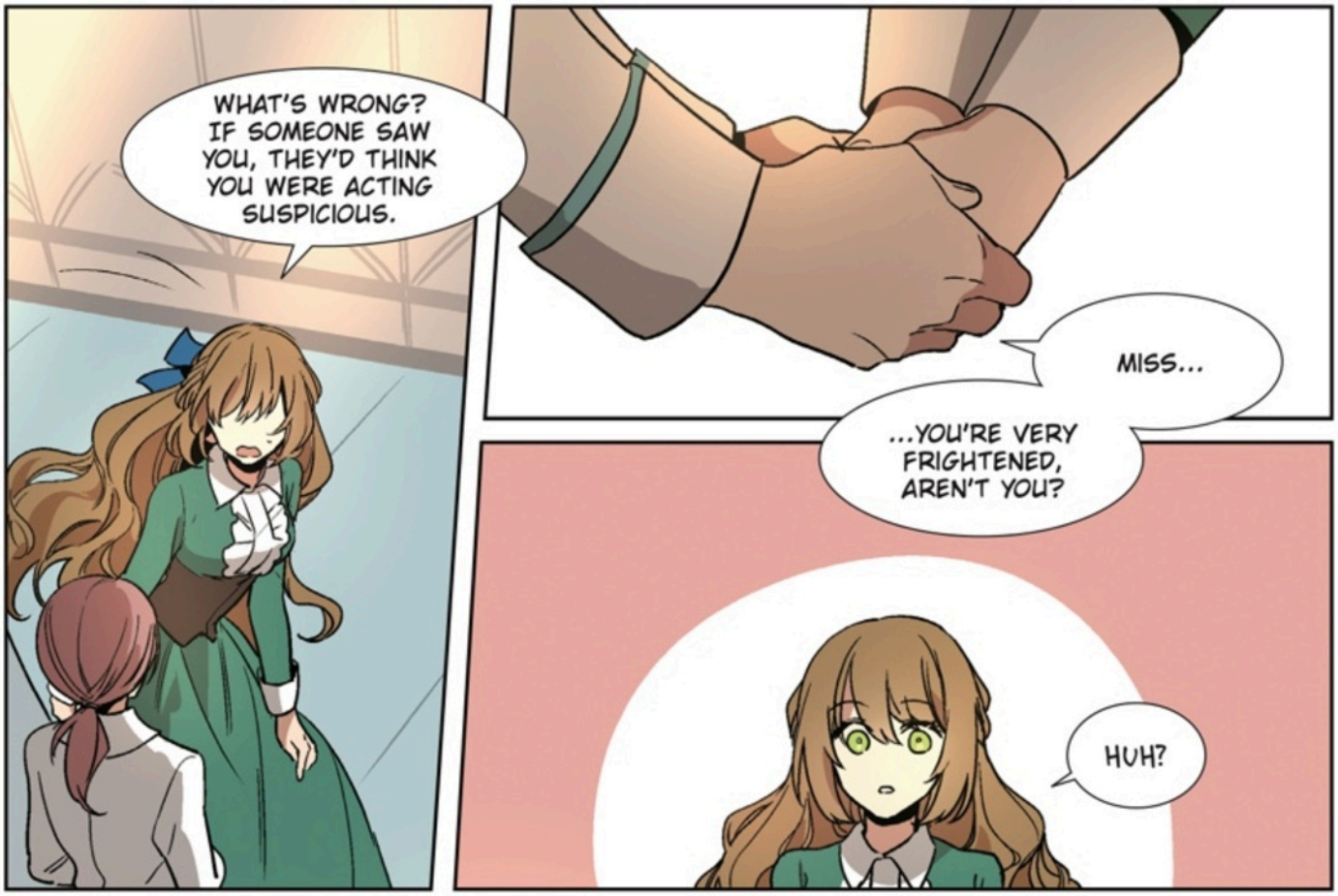

BRIDAL-PROPRIETY LESSONS...
I KNOW THEY'RE PART OF KEEPING UP WITH THIS RUSE...
...BUT LIVING AT SOMEONE ELSE'S HOUSE? BEING JUDGED ON HOW WELL I ACT...?
RISE
IT'S TOO MUCH TO HANDLE...!!
I'M STEPPING OUT FOR A WALK IN THE GARDEN.
SHF

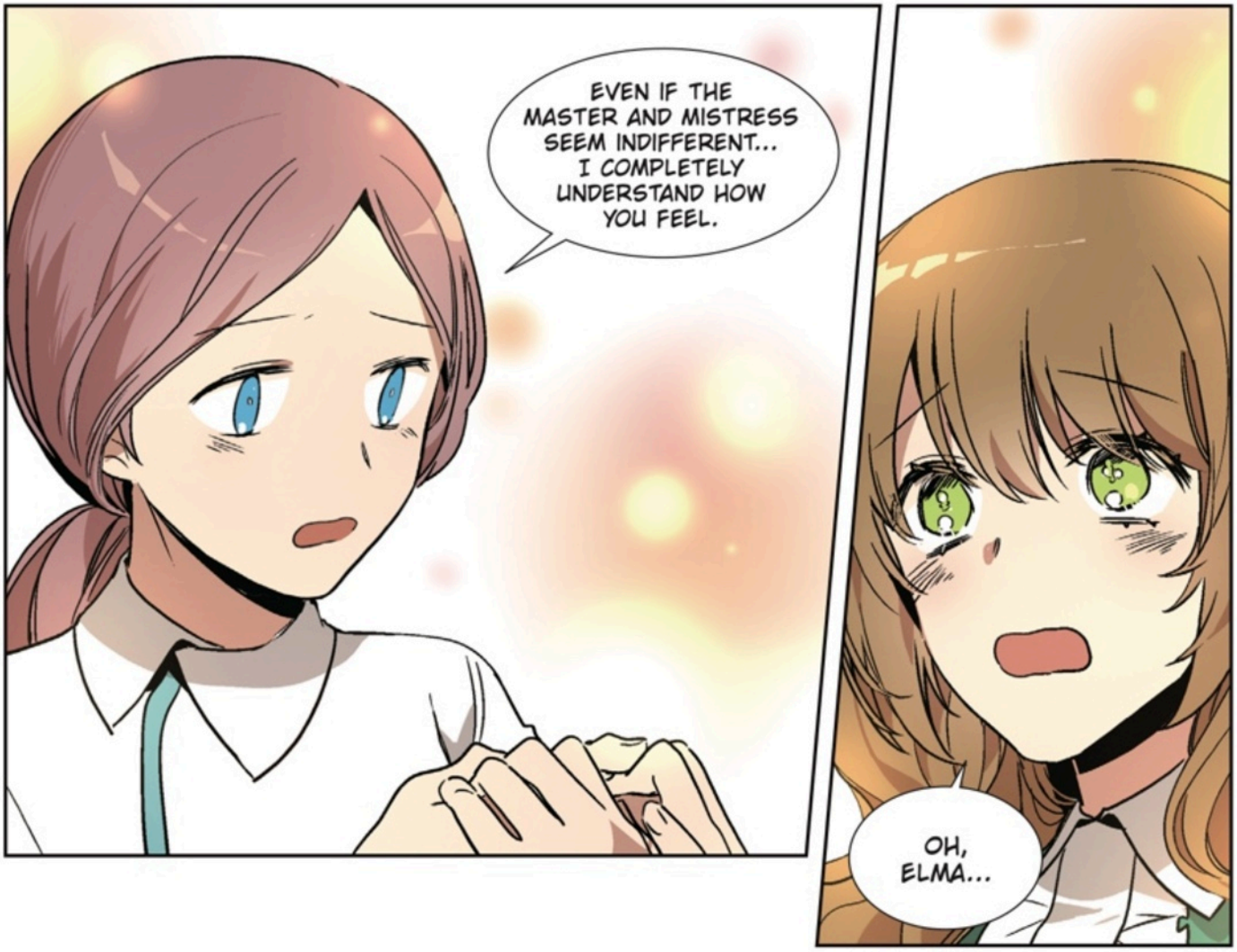


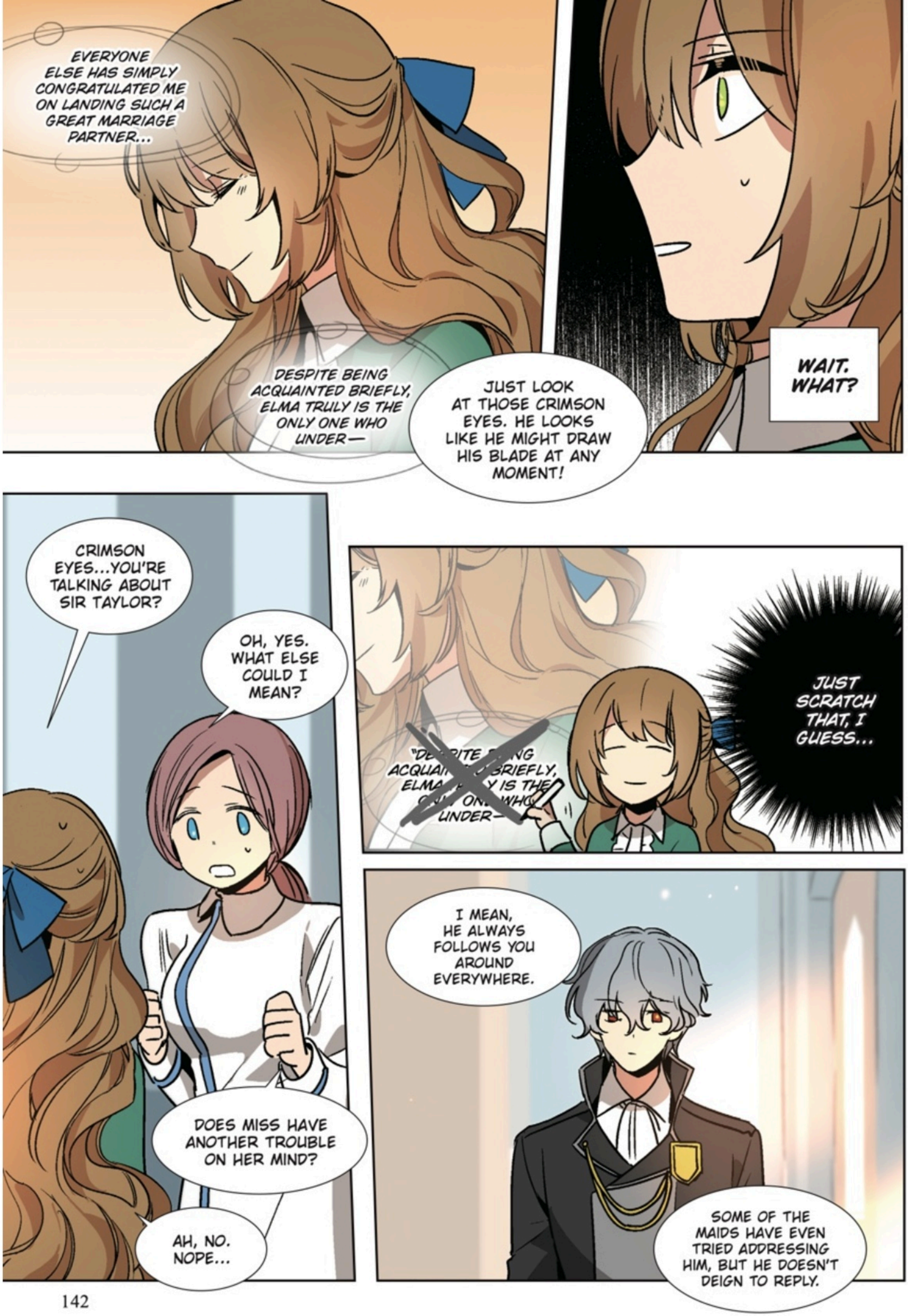
MISS!

...?

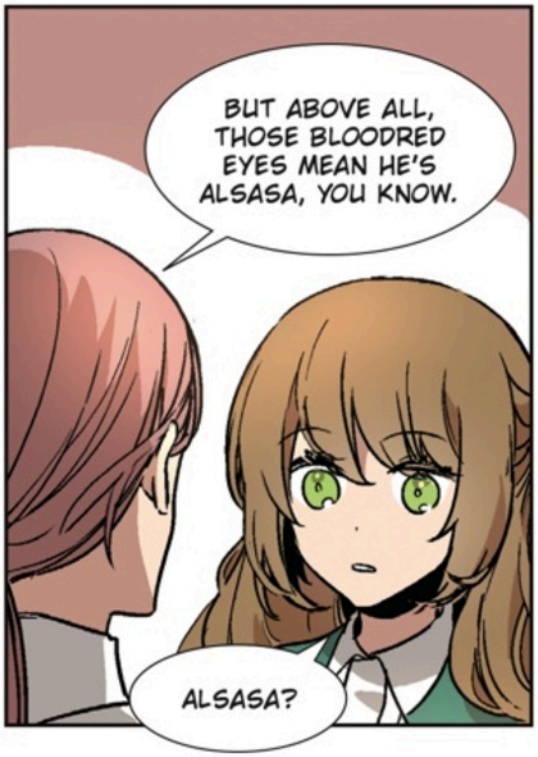

MISS, IT'S ME.
ELMA!

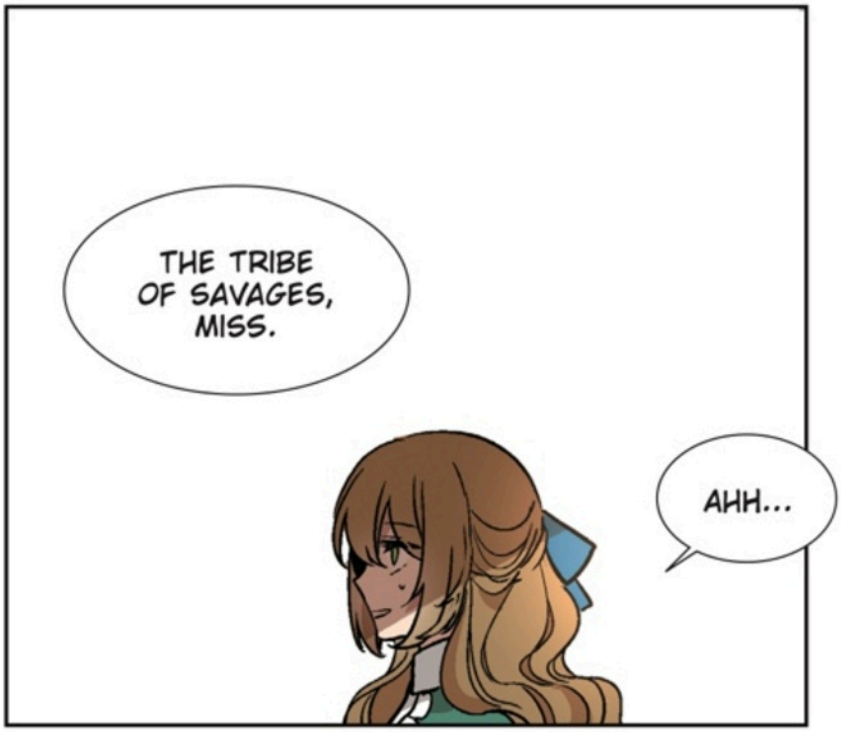

WHAT'S WRONG? IF SOMEONE SAW YOU, THEY'D THINK YOU WERE ACTING SUSPICIOUS.
MISS...
...YOU'RE VERY FRIGHTENED, AREN'T YOU?
HUH?

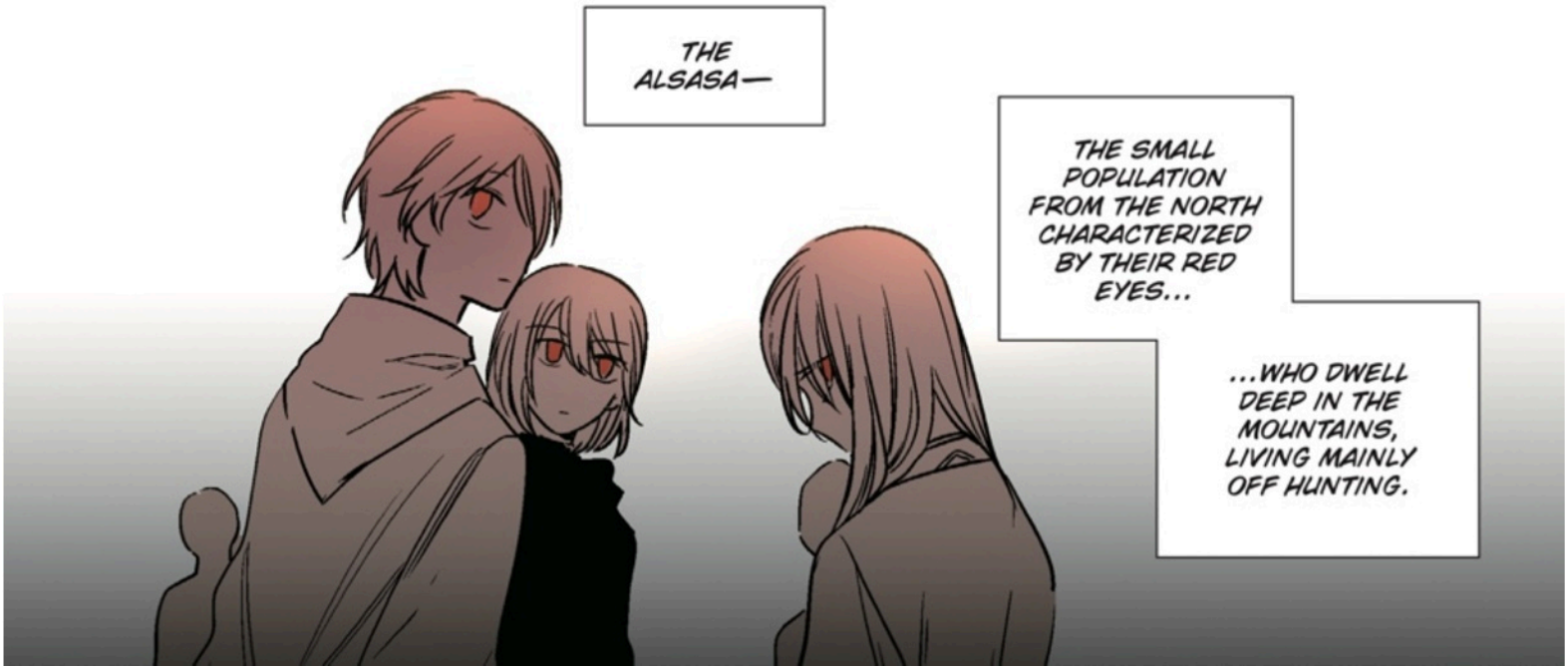

EVEN IF THE MASTER AND MISTRESS SEEM INDIFFERENT... I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL.
OH, ELMA...


EVERYONE ELSE HAS SIMPLY CONGRATULATED ME ON LANDING SUCH A GREAT MARRIAGE PARTNER...
DESPITE BEING ACQUAINTED BRIEFLY, ELMA TRULY IS THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDER—
JUST LOOK AT THOSE CRIMSON EYES. HE LOOKS LIKE HE MIGHT DRAW HIS BLADE AT ANY MOMENT!
WAIT. WHAT?
CRIMSON EYES...YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT SIR TAYLOR?
OH, YES. WHAT ELSE COULD I MEAN?
DOES MISS HAVE ANOTHER TROUBLE ON HER MIND?
AH, NO. NOPE...
JUST SCRATCH THAT, I GUESS...
I MEAN, HE ALWAYS FOLLOWS YOU AROUND EVERYWHERE.
SOME OF THE MAIDS HAVE EVEN TRIED ADDRESSING HIM, BUT HE DOESN'T DEIGN TO REPLY.

AND I HEARD PEOPLE CALL HIM THE ANGEL OF DEATH.
ELMA!


BUT ABOVE ALL, THOSE BLOODRED EYES MEAN HE'S ALSASA, YOU KNOW.
ALSASA?


THE TRIBE OF SAVAGES, MISS.
AHH...


THE ALSASA—
THE SMALL POPULATION FROM THE NORTH CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR RED EYES...
...WHO DWELL DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS, LIVING MAINLY OFF HUNTING.

I'VE HEARD THEM DESCRIBED AS BEING LARGELY BELLIGERENT AND ADEPT WITH THEIR SWORDS.

FOR THAT, THEY'RE OFTEN SOUGHT AS MERCENARIES...

...YET REMAIN SOMEWHAT— NO, VERY MUCH DISFAVORED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM.

THEY SAY THE ALSASA'S FONDNESS FOR BLOOD IS WHY THEIR EYES ARE RED.

THAT STUFF'S ALL MADE UP.

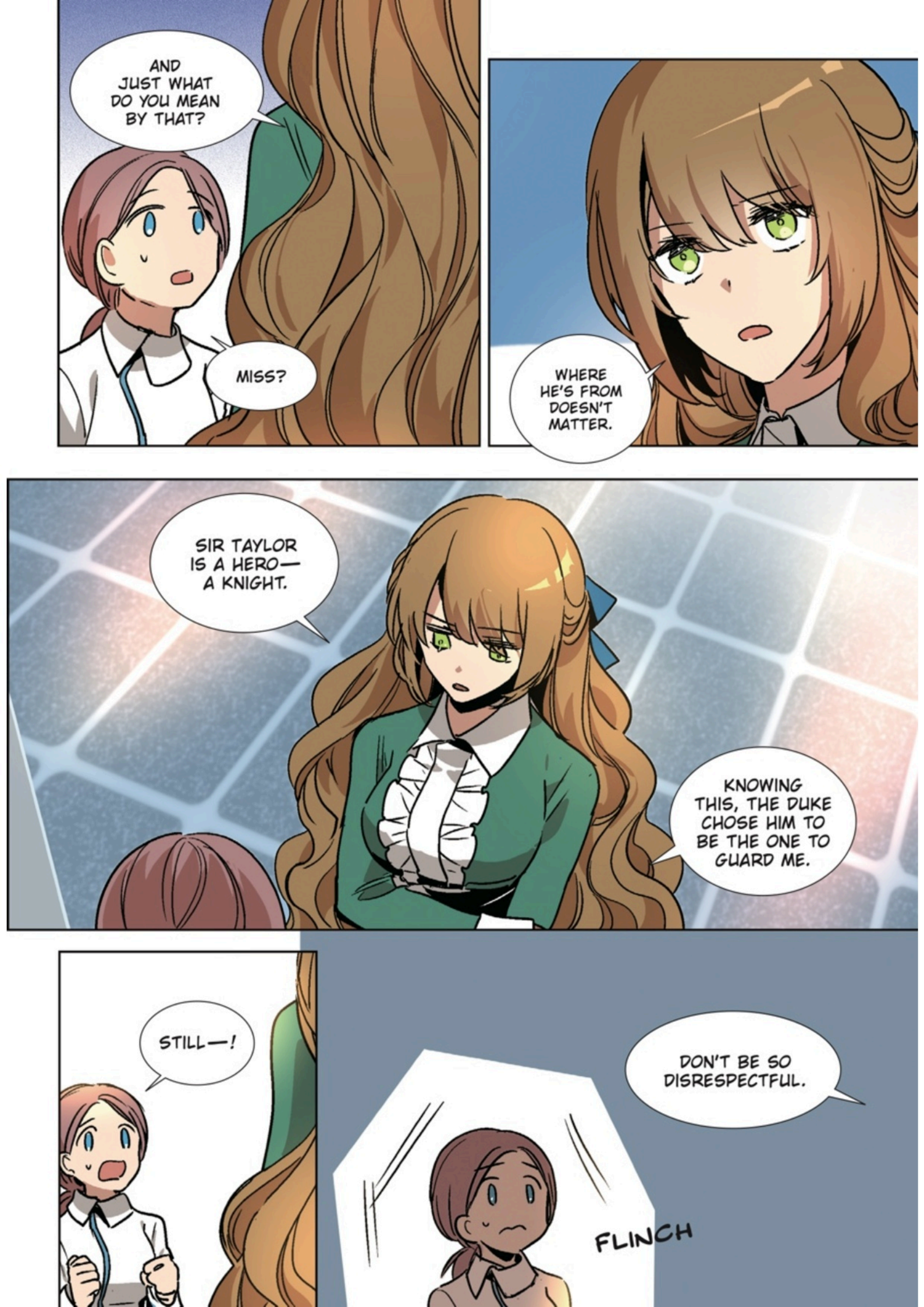
BUT IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN WITHOUT REASON.

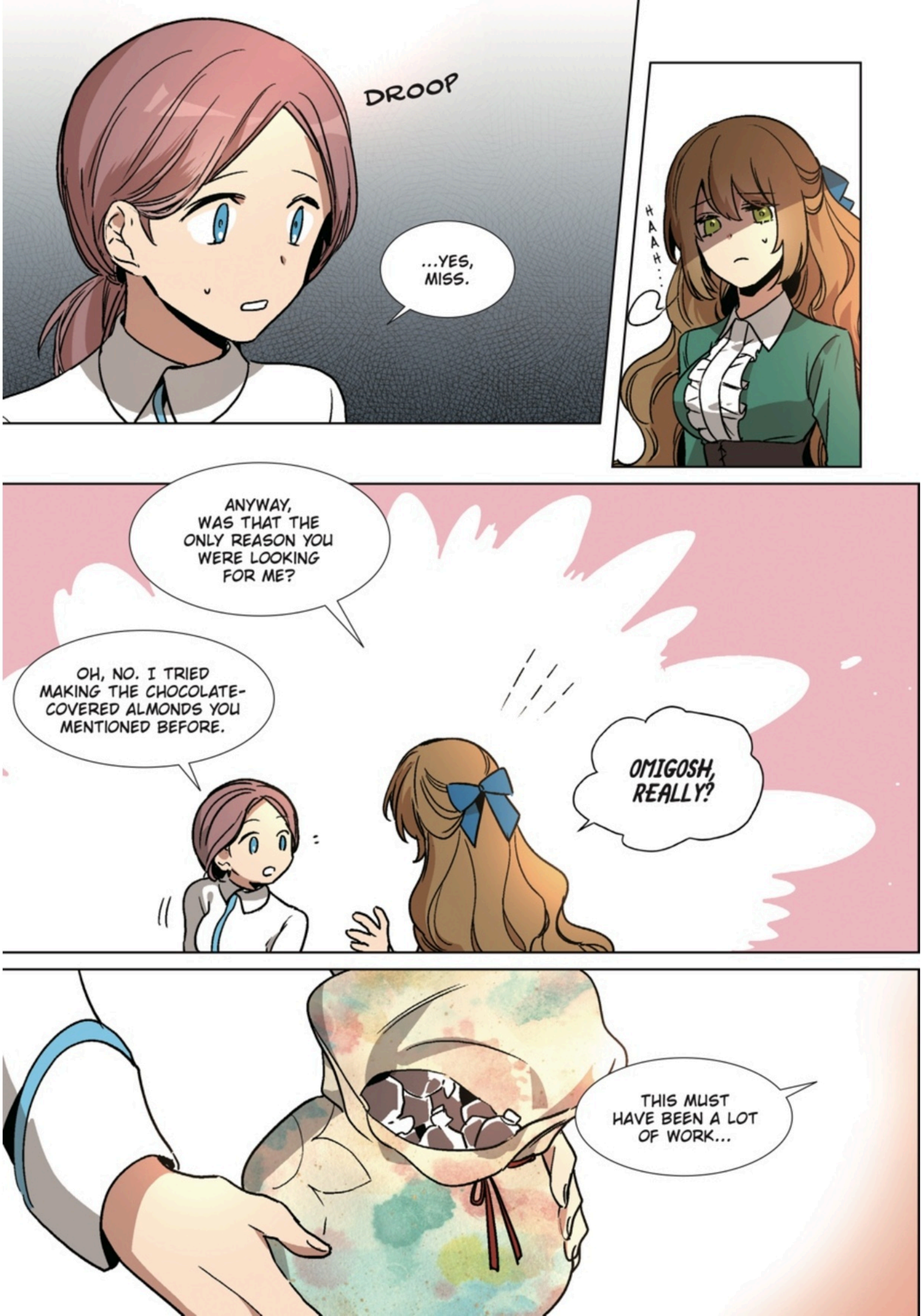
HOWEVER MUCH OF A TRUSTED ALLY TO THE DUKE HE IS...

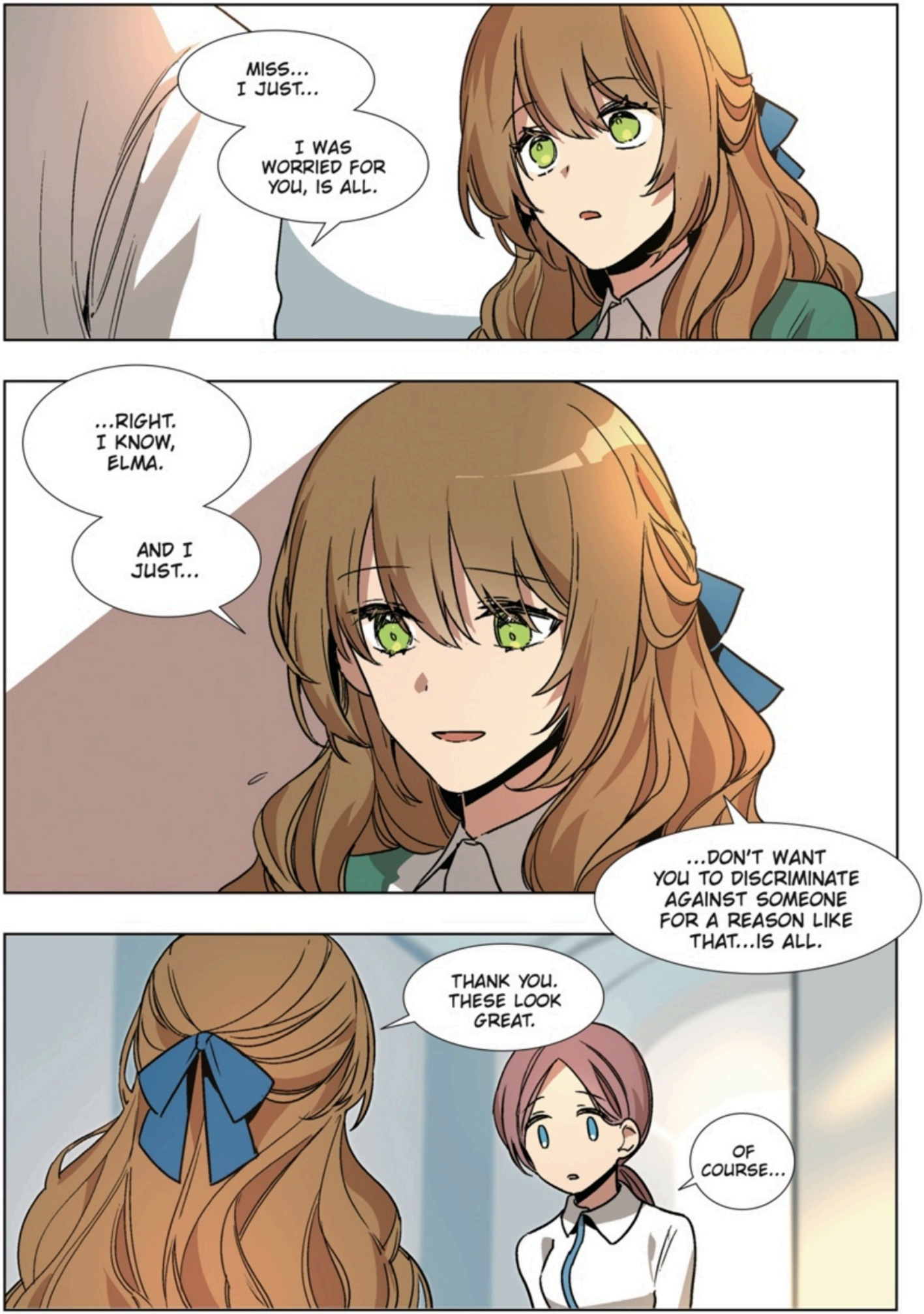
...THERE MUST BE CAPABLE KNIGHTS OF MORE ACCEPTABLE ORIGINS IN THE DUKE'S EMPLOY.

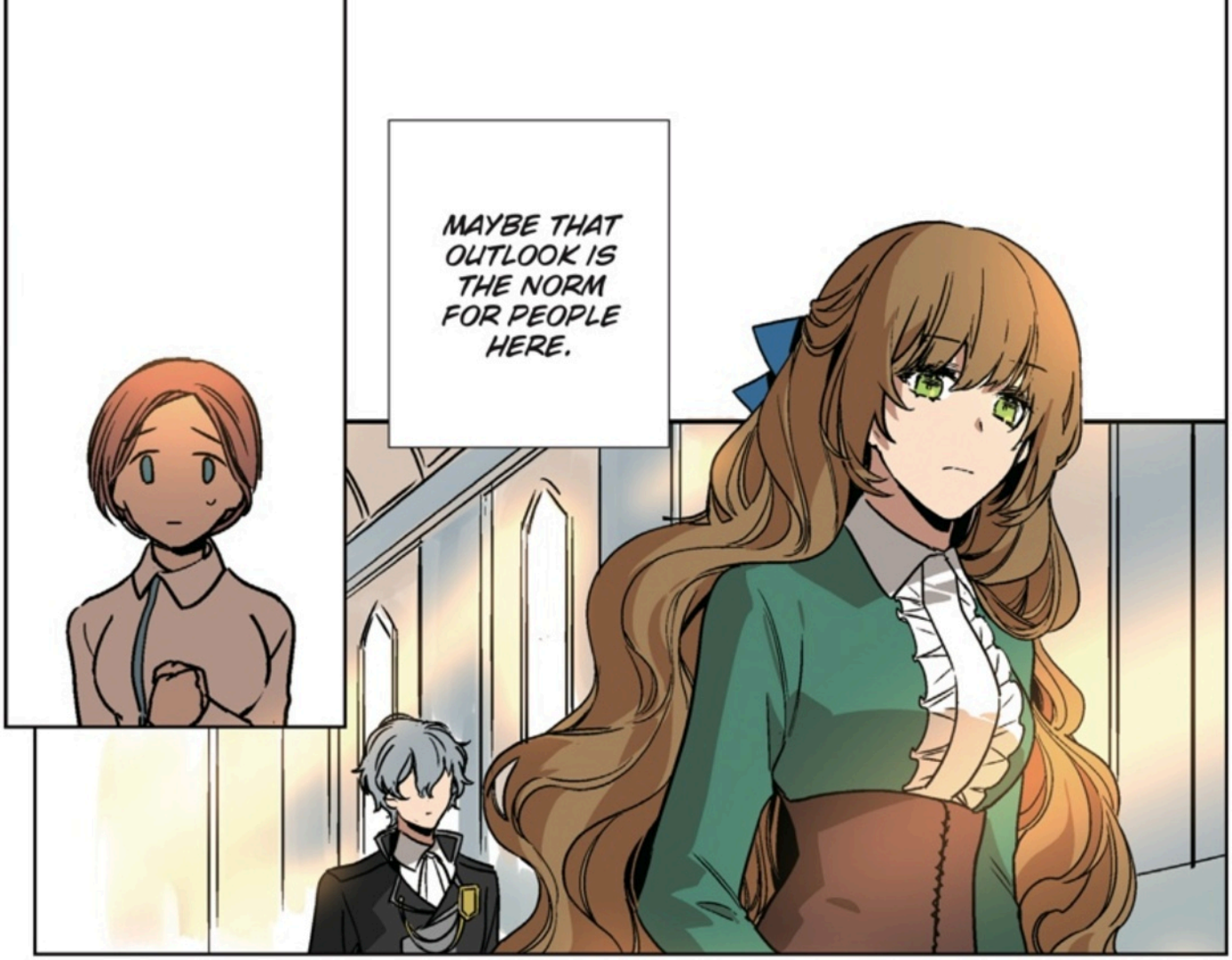
I DON'T KNOW WHY HE'D SEND SUCH A PERSON.

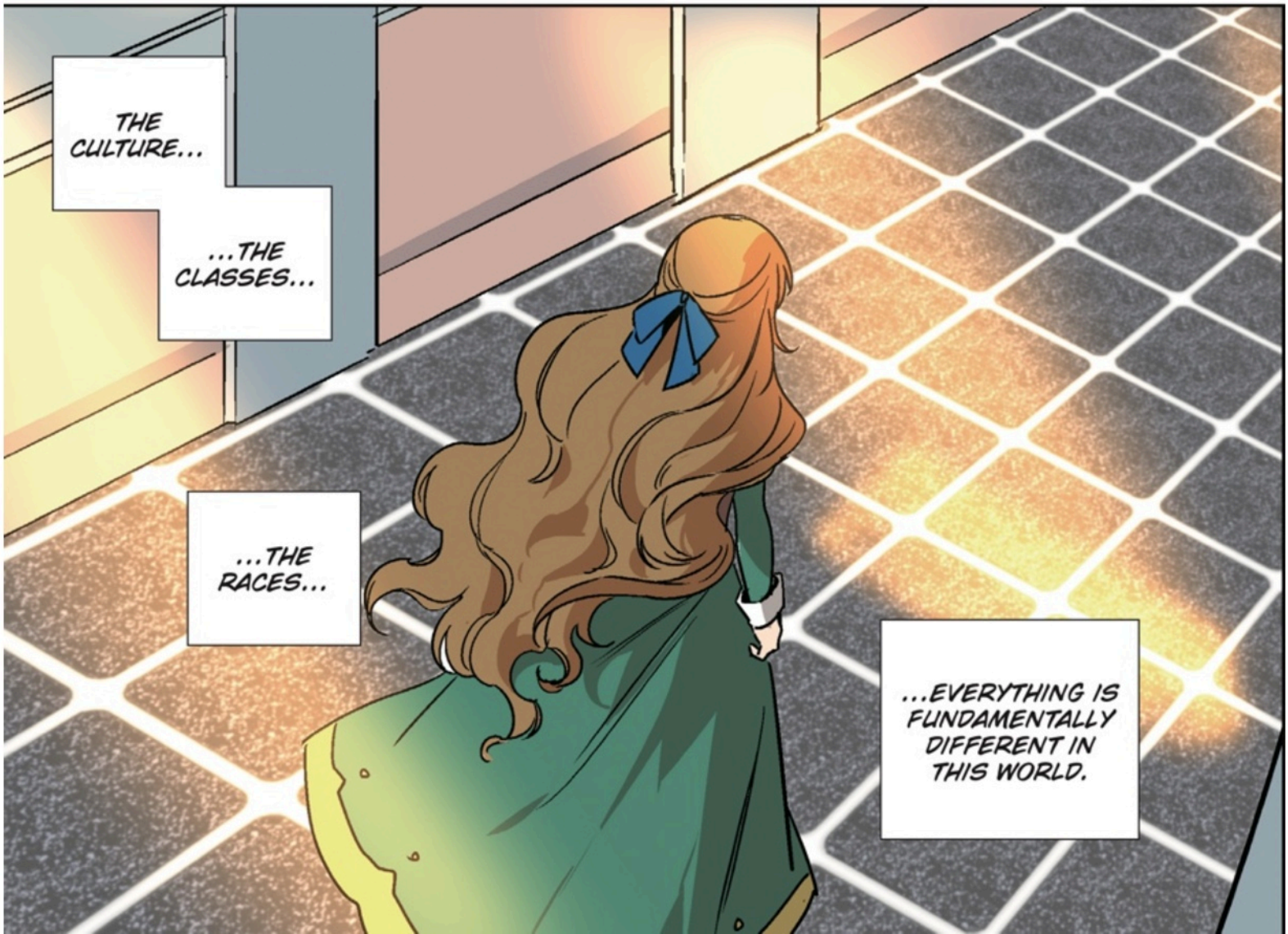
"SUCH A PERSON"?

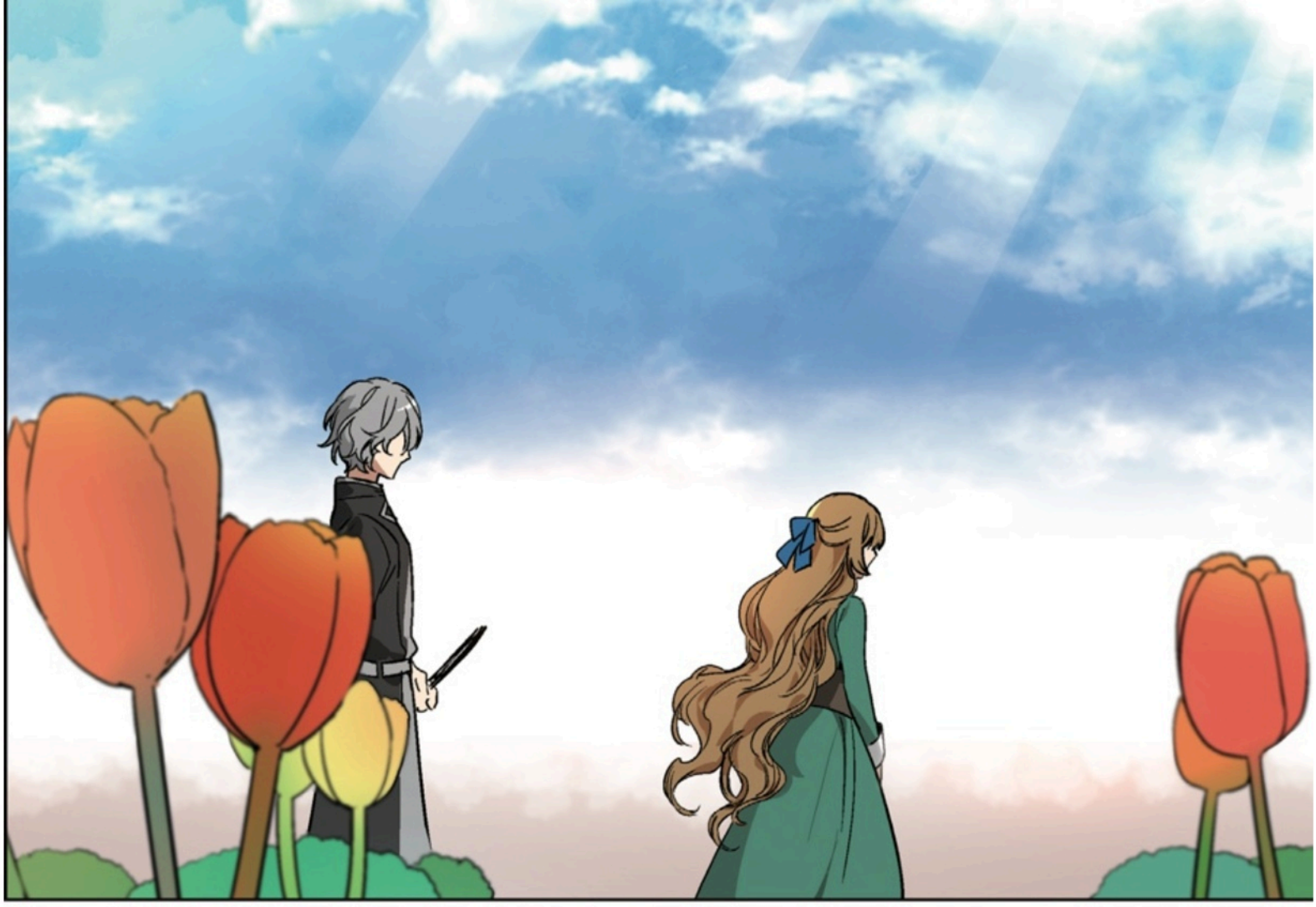

AND JUST WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?
MISS?
WHERE HE'S FROM DOESN'T MATTER.
SIR TAYLOR IS A HERO— A KNIGHT.
KNOWING THIS, THE DUKE CHOSE HIM TO BE THE ONE TO GUARD ME.
STILL—!
DON'T BE SO DISRESPECTFUL.
FLINCH

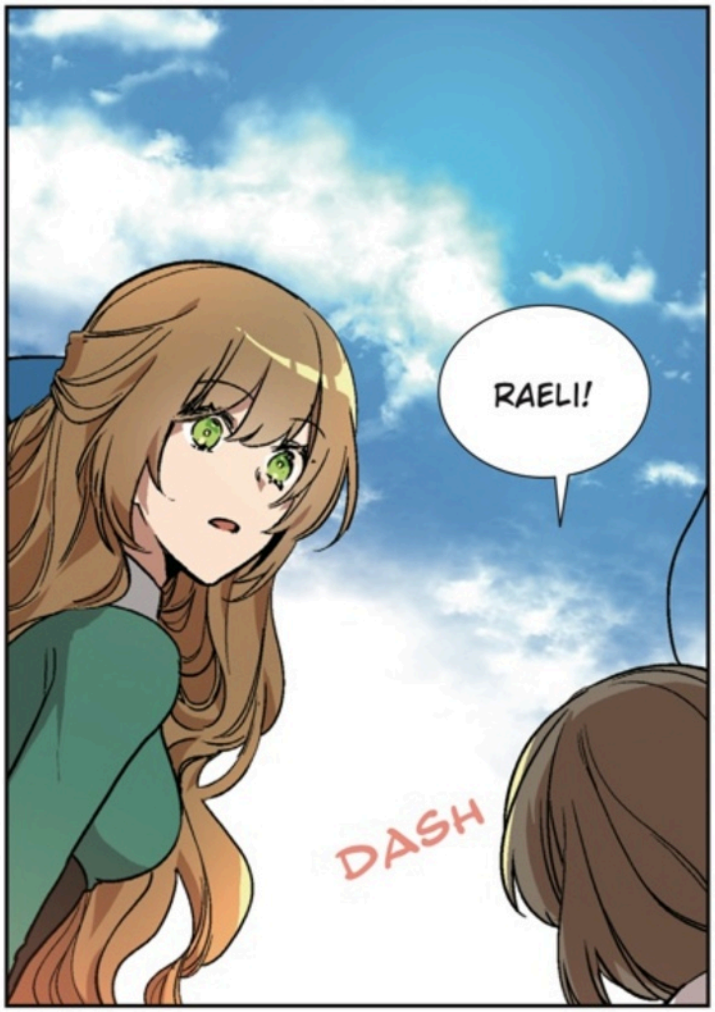

DROOP
...YES, MISS.
HAAH...
ANYWAY, WAS THAT THE ONLY REASON YOU WERE LOOKING FOR ME?
OH, NO. I TRIED MAKING THE CHOCOLATE-COVERED ALMONDS YOU MENTIONED BEFORE.
OMIGOSH, REALLY?
THIS MUST HAVE BEEN A LOT OF WORK...


MISS... I JUST...
I WAS WORRIED FOR YOU, IS ALL.
...RIGHT. I KNOW, ELMA.
AND I JUST...
...DON'T WANT YOU TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST SOMEONE FOR A REASON LIKE THAT...IS ALL.
THANK YOU. THESE LOOK GREAT.
OF COURSE...


MAYBE THAT OUTLOOK IS THE NORM FOR PEOPLE HERE.

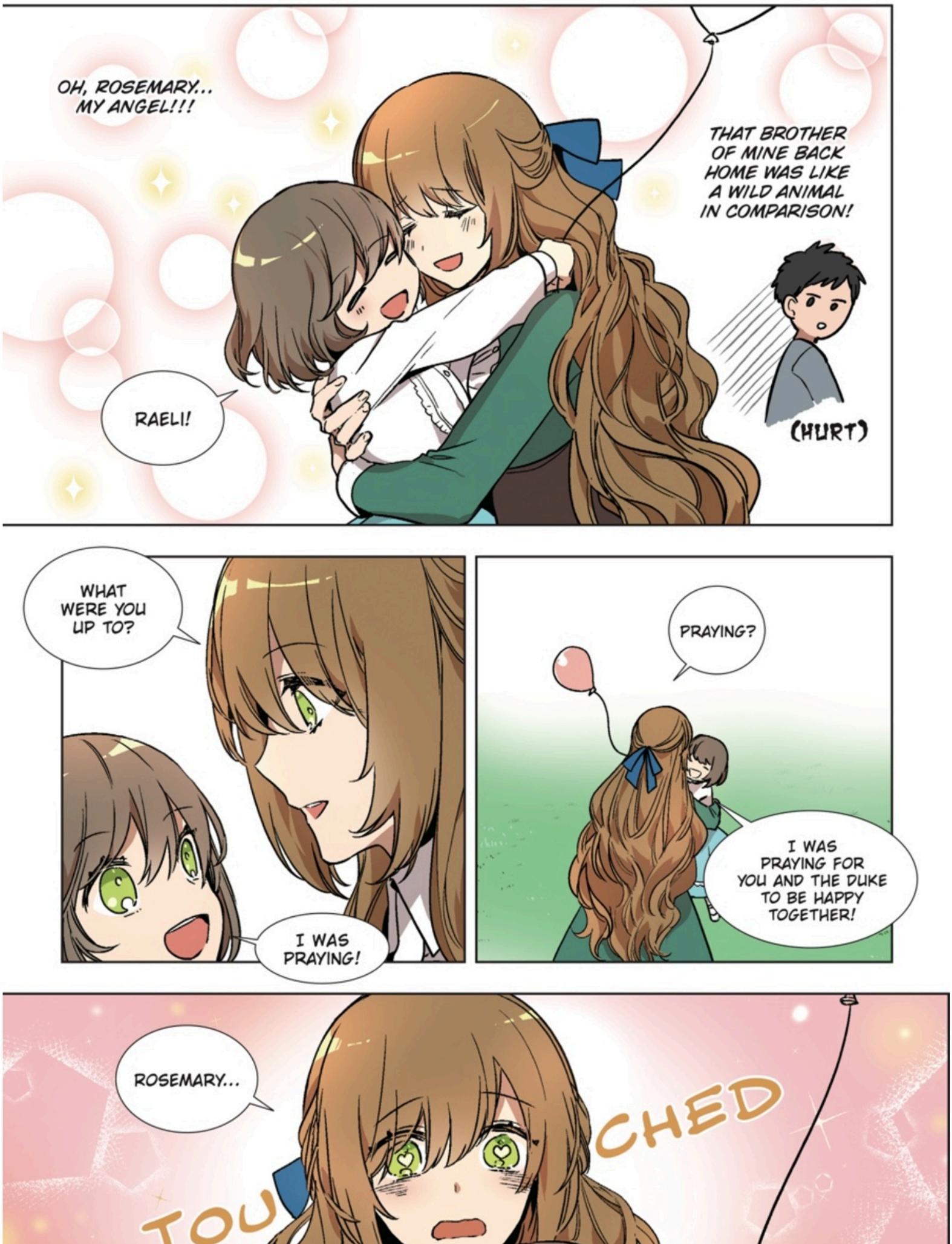

THE CULTURE...
...THE CLASSES...
...THE RACES...
...EVERYTHING IS FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT IN THIS WORLD.



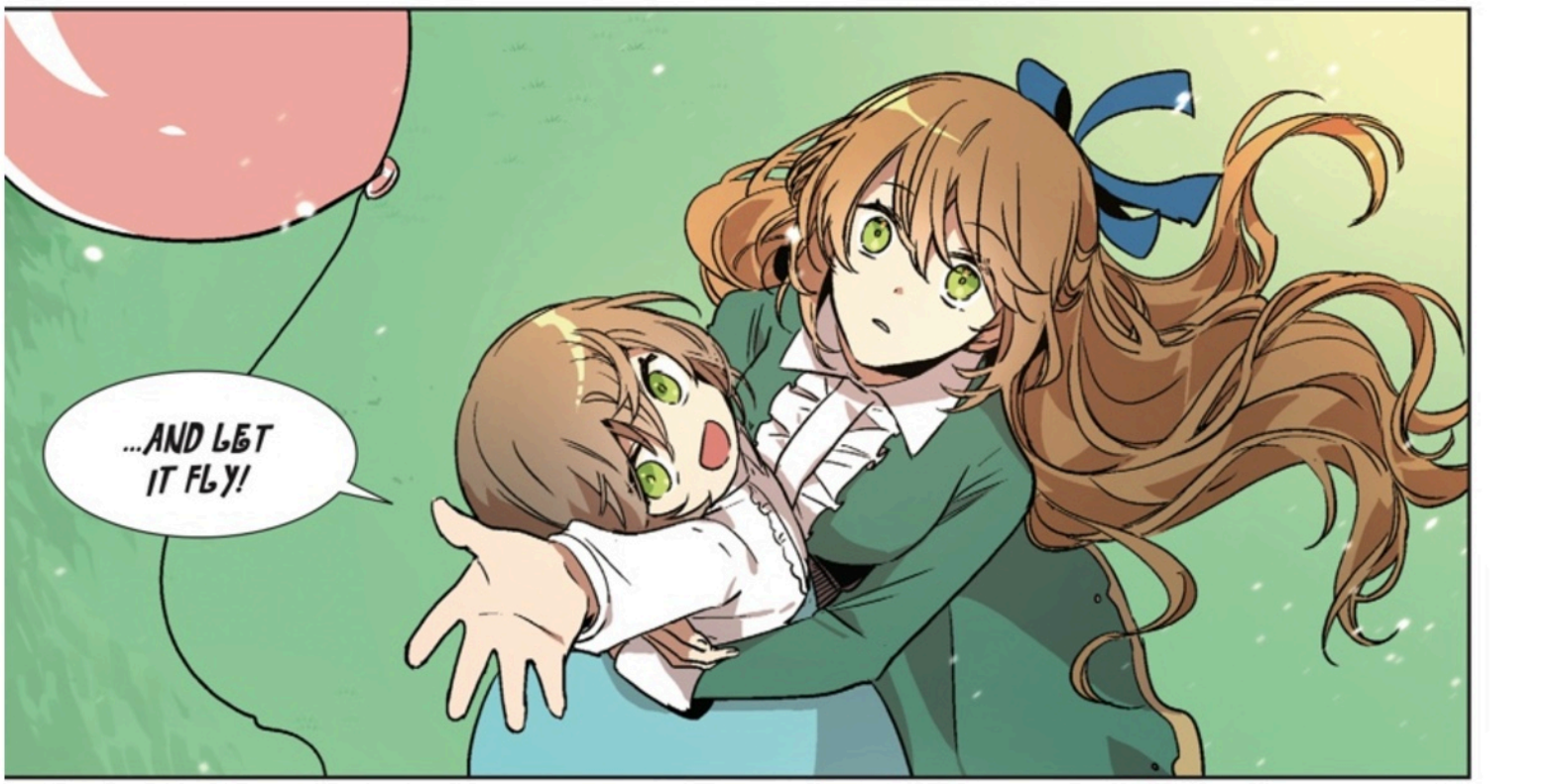

RAELI!
DASH

HEE HEE!

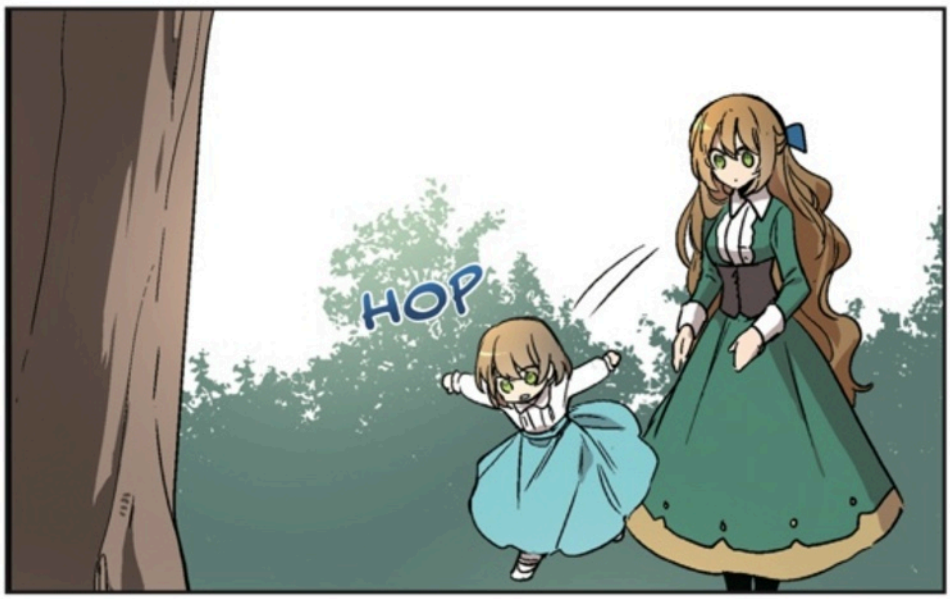
D'AWW!


OH, ROSEMARY... MY ANGEL!!!
RAELI!
THAT BROTHER OF MINE BACK HOME WAS LIKE A WILD ANIMAL IN COMPARISON!
(HURT)
WHAT WERE YOU UP TO?
I WAS PRAYING!
PRAYING?
I WAS PRAYING FOR YOU AND THE DUKE TO BE HAPPY TOGETHER!
ROSEMARY...
TOUCHED

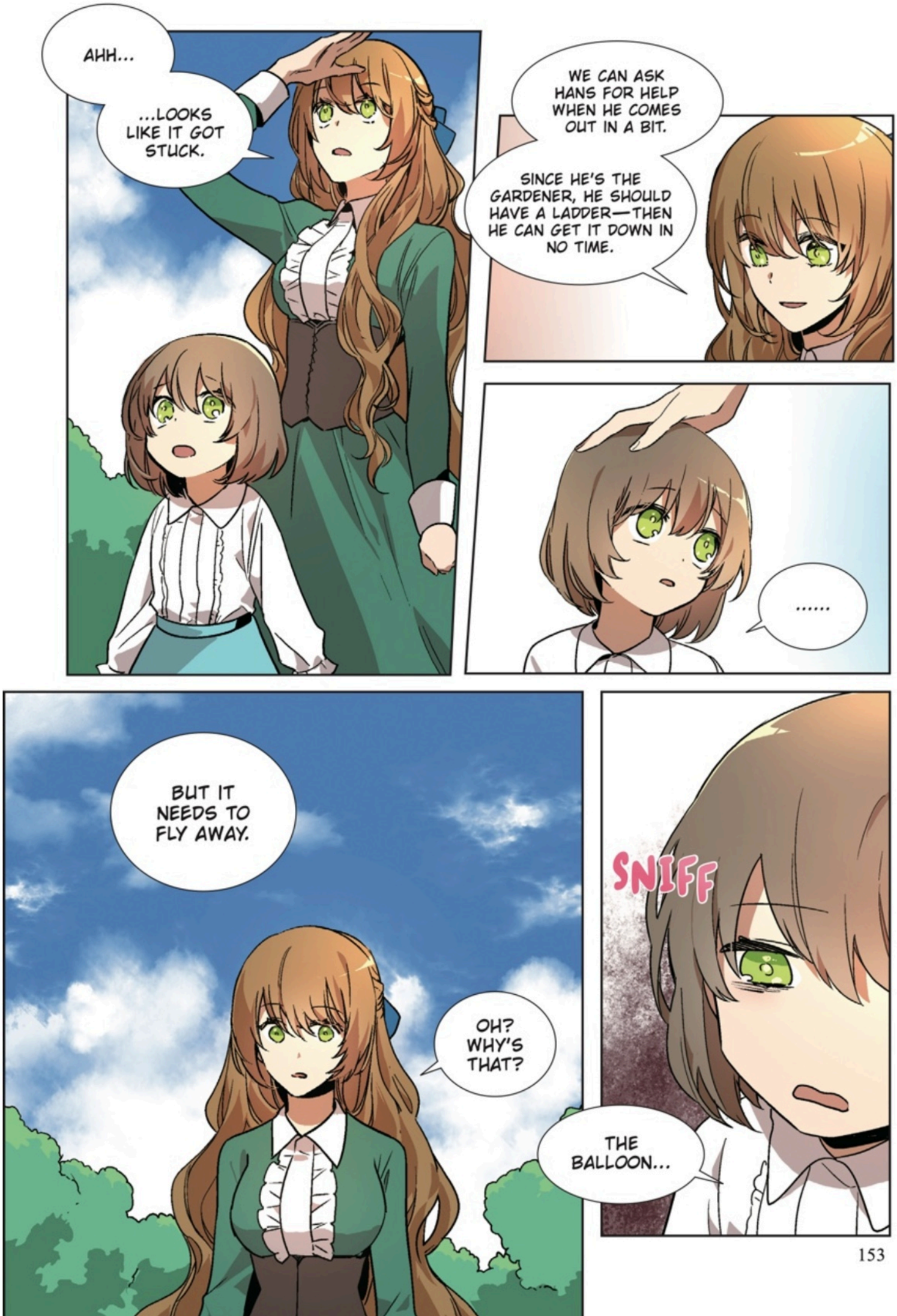
TWIRL
EEK!
I'M GETTING DIZZY!
TWIRL
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!!
OH, ROSEMARY...
...DON'T EVER LET YOURSELF BE FOOLED BY SOME HIGH-CLASS, HANDSOME JERK.
OKAY!
IT'S ALWAYS GOOD CHARACTER YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK FOR IN PEOPLE.
.....
GOT IT!
WHAT'S WITH THE BALLOON, BY THE WAY?
OH!
YOU TAKE IT LIKE THIS...

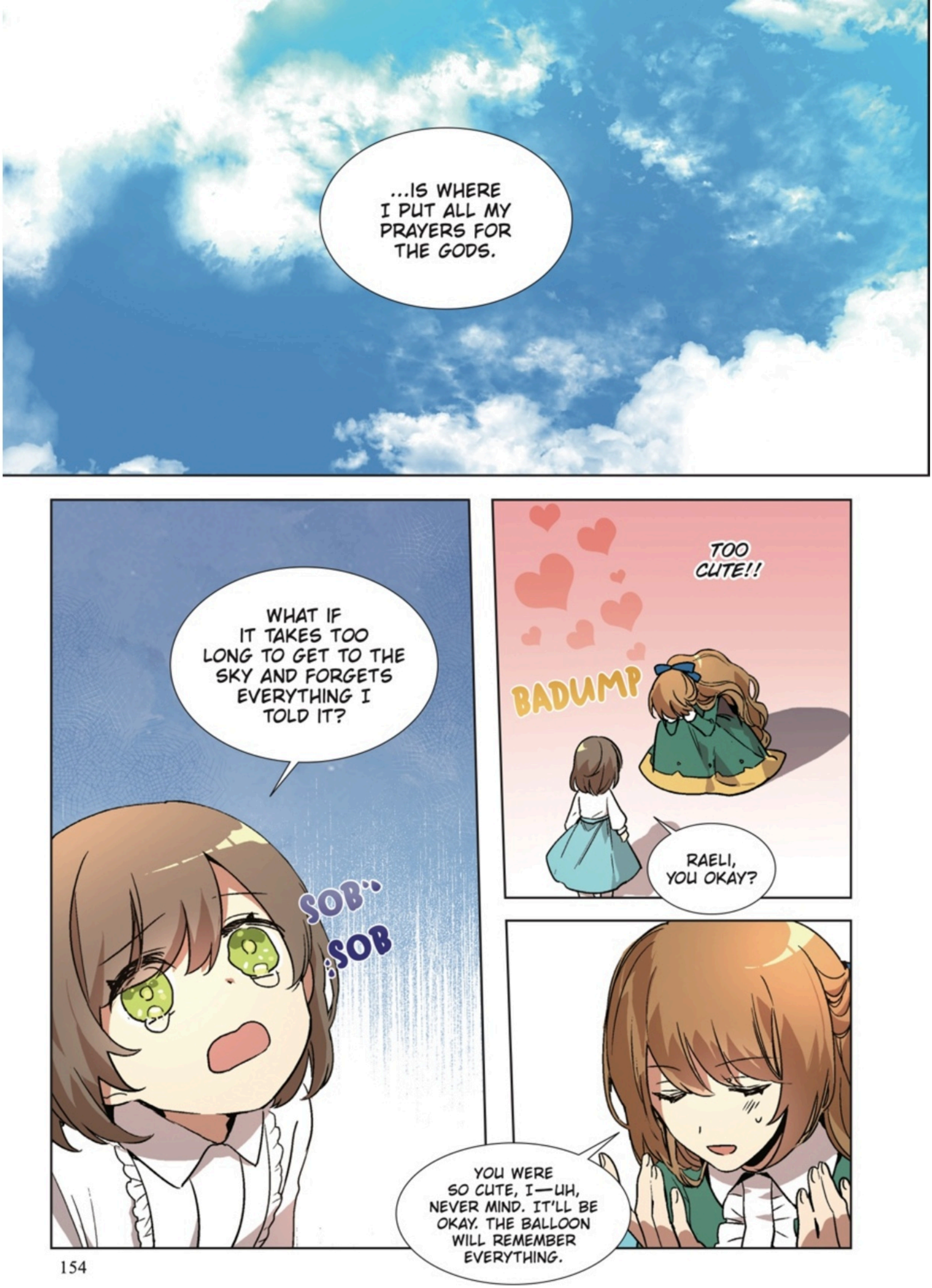

...AND LET IT FLY!

HUH?


HOP

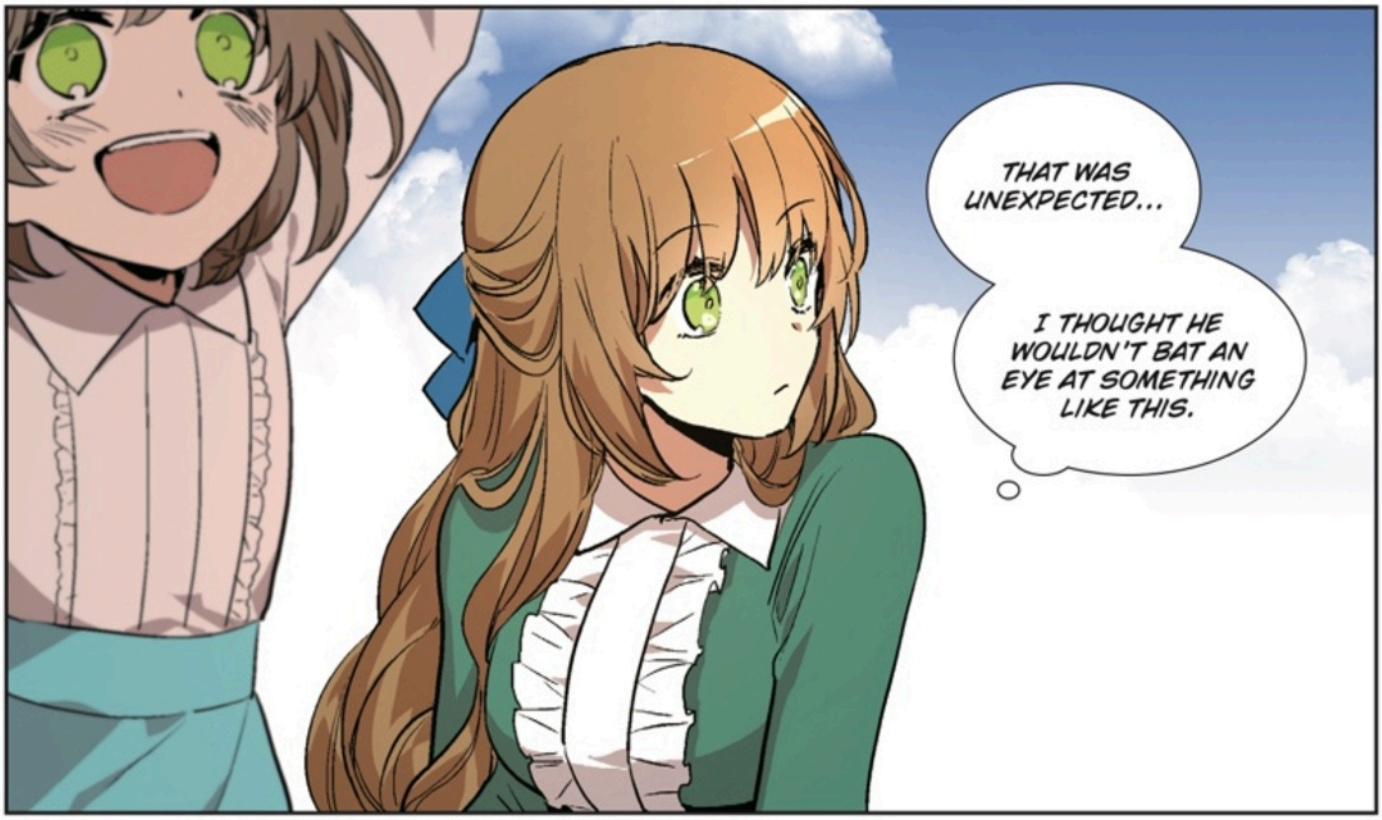
OH NO...

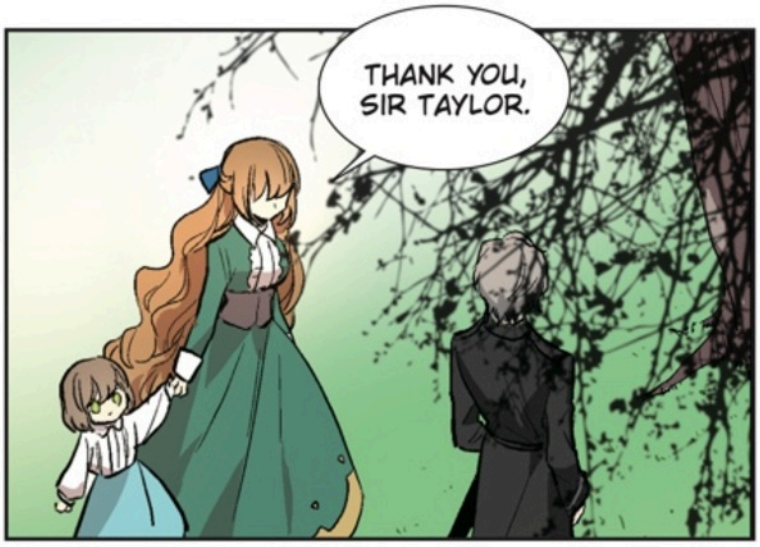

AHH...
...LOOKS LIKE IT GOT STUCK.
WE CAN ASK HANS FOR HELP WHEN HE COMES OUT IN A BIT.
SINCE HE'S THE GARDENER, HE SHOULD HAVE A LADDER—THEN HE CAN GET IT DOWN IN NO TIME.
.....
BUT IT NEEDS TO FLY AWAY.
OH? WHY'S THAT?
SNIFF
THE BALLOON...


...IS WHERE I PUT ALL MY PRAYERS FOR THE GODS.
WHAT IF IT TAKES TOO LONG TO GET TO THE SKY AND FORGETS EVERYTHING I TOLD IT?
SOB
SOB
TOO CUTE!!
BADUMP
RAELI, YOU OKAY?
YOU WERE SO CUTE, I—UH, NEVER MIND. IT'LL BE OKAY. THE BALLOON WILL REMEMBER EVERYTHING.

HERE—SHALL WE EAT SOME OF THESE WHILE WE WAIT FOR HANS?
A-ALL RIGHT...
THERE, NOW—WHAT A GOOD GIRL.
SWISH
SCHLING

THUNK
SHINK


THAT WAS UNEXPECTED...
I THOUGHT HE WOULDN'T BAT AN EYE AT SOMETHING LIKE THIS.


THANK YOU, SIR TAYLOR.

ROSEMARY, YOU SHOULD THANK HIM TOO.

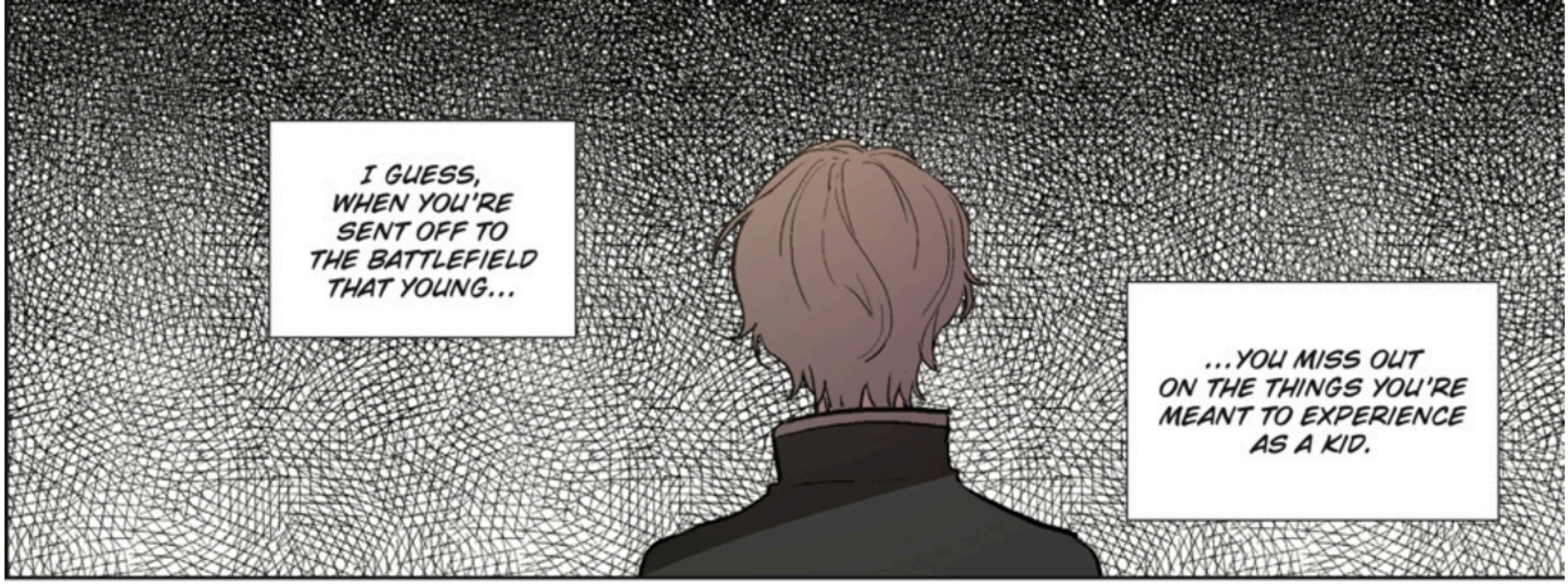
DASH

HOLD OUT YOUR HAND!
.....?
PLOP
THANK YOU, SIR.

NOD
.....? WASN'T HIS RESPONSE A LITTLE MORE IMMEDIATE JUST NOW?
DO YOU LIKE SWEET THINGS?
TILT
.....
NOD
HEH, HE'S GOT A CUTE SIDE TO HIM TOO...

PLACE
STARTLE
AH—

SEEING HIM LIKE THIS, IT'S CLEAR THAT HE REALLY IS JUST A KID.

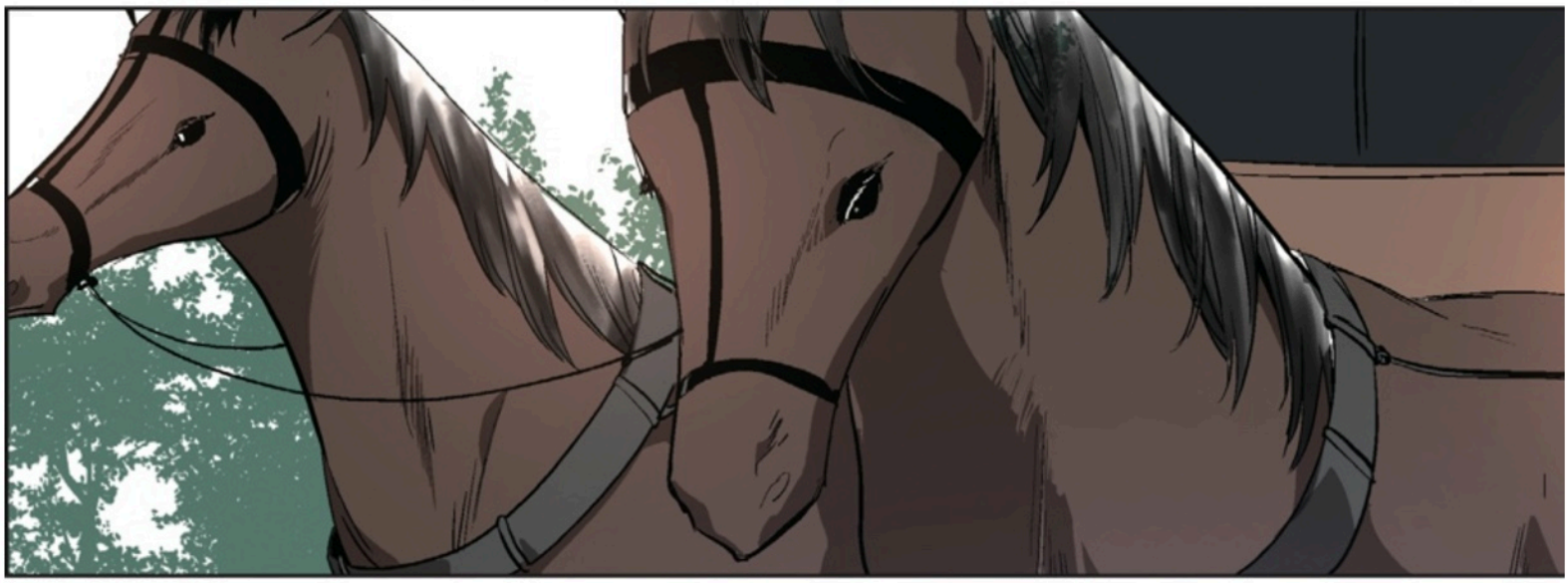

I GUESS, WHEN YOU'RE SENT OFF TO THE BATTLEFIELD THAT YOUNG...
...YOU MISS OUT ON THE THINGS YOU'RE MEANT TO EXPERIENCE AS A KID.

I'LL BE IN YOUR CARE FROM NOW ON.

BEFORE I GO LIVE WITH THE DUKE,
I SHOULD ASK ELMA TO
MAKE SOME MORE OF THESE.

Stage 2

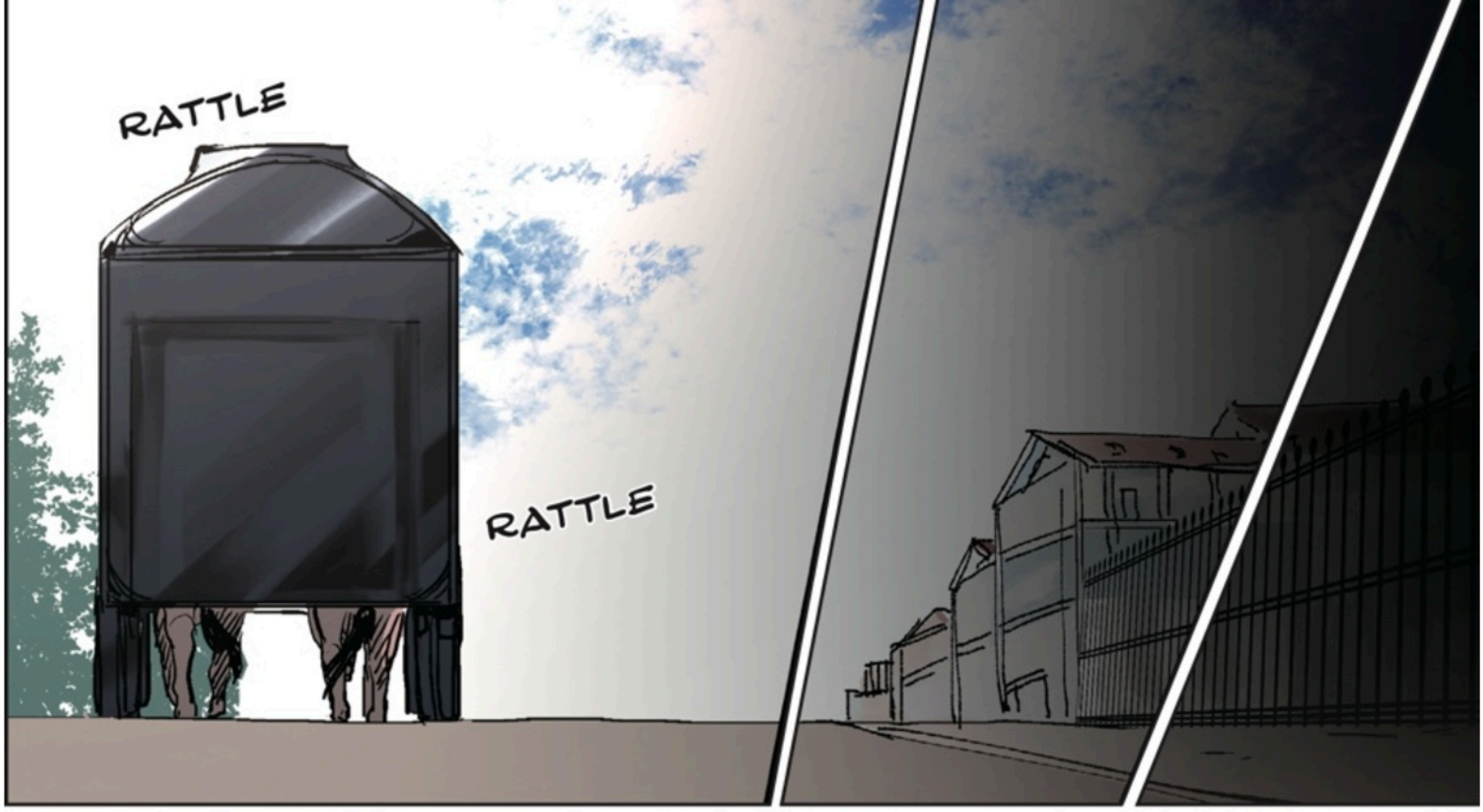
To the Duke's Mansion

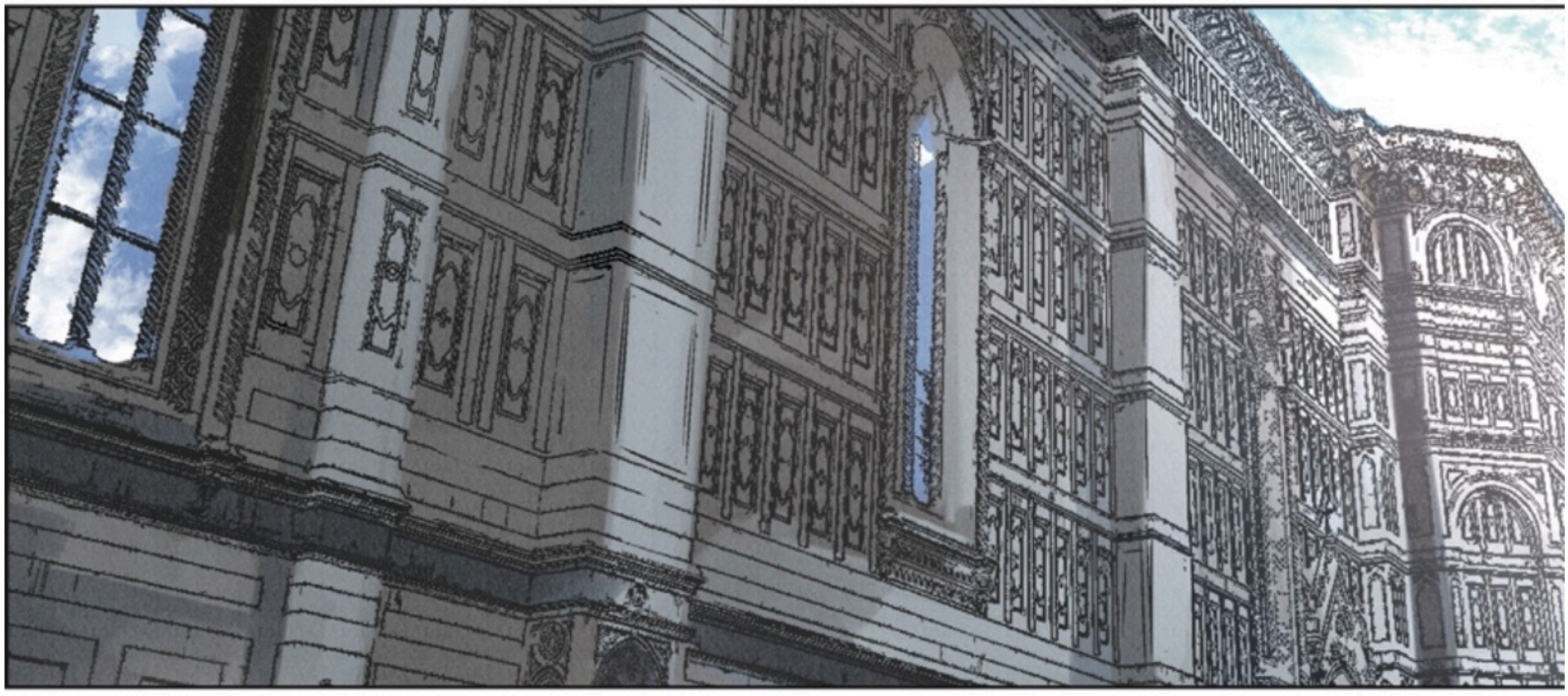


ARE THESE HORSES HAULING A CARRIAGE OR A CASTLE...?
THE DUKE'S HORSE CARRIAGE LOOKS LIKE IT COULD CARRY OUR ENTIRE HOUSE.

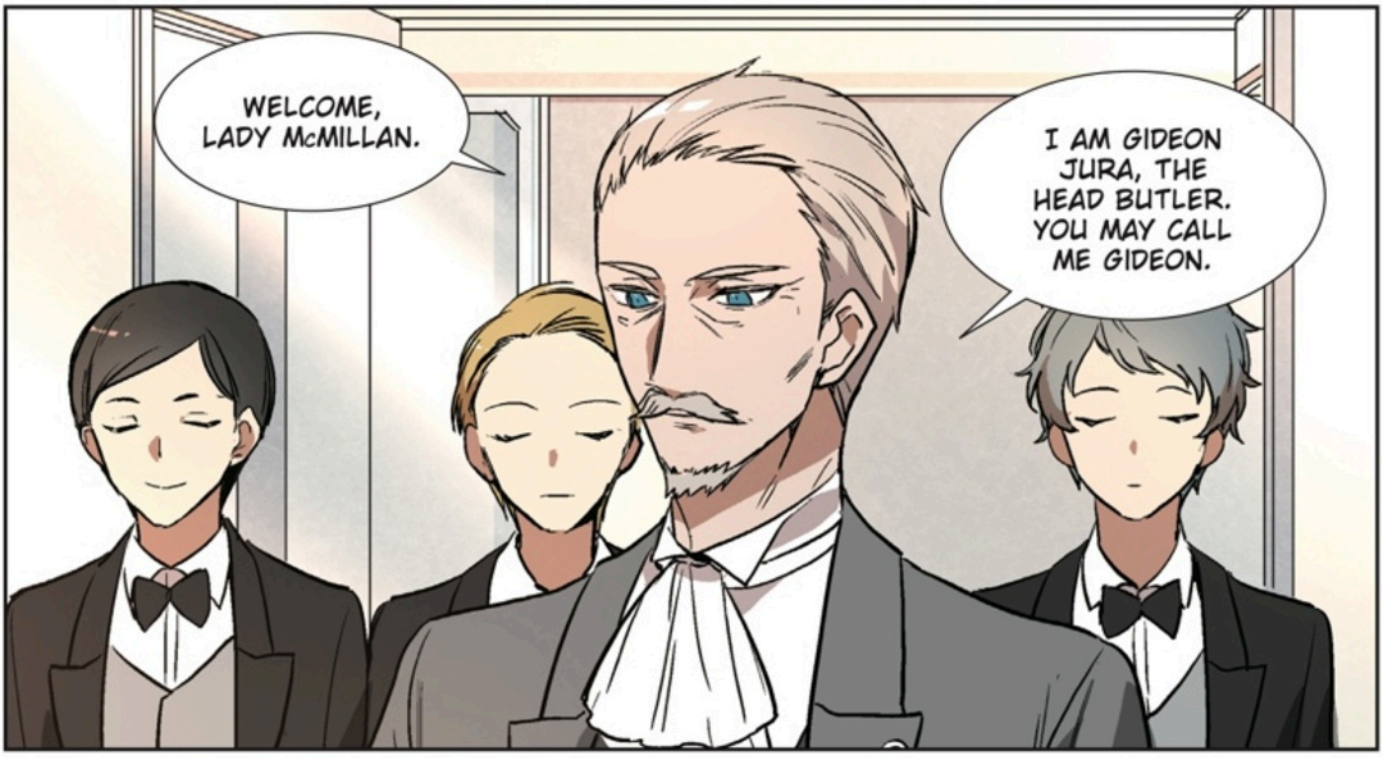
IS THAT ALL OF YOUR LUGGAGE? PLEASE LET US KNOW IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU WISH TO BRING.
AH, NO— THIS IS IT.
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M MOVING OUT, IS IT?

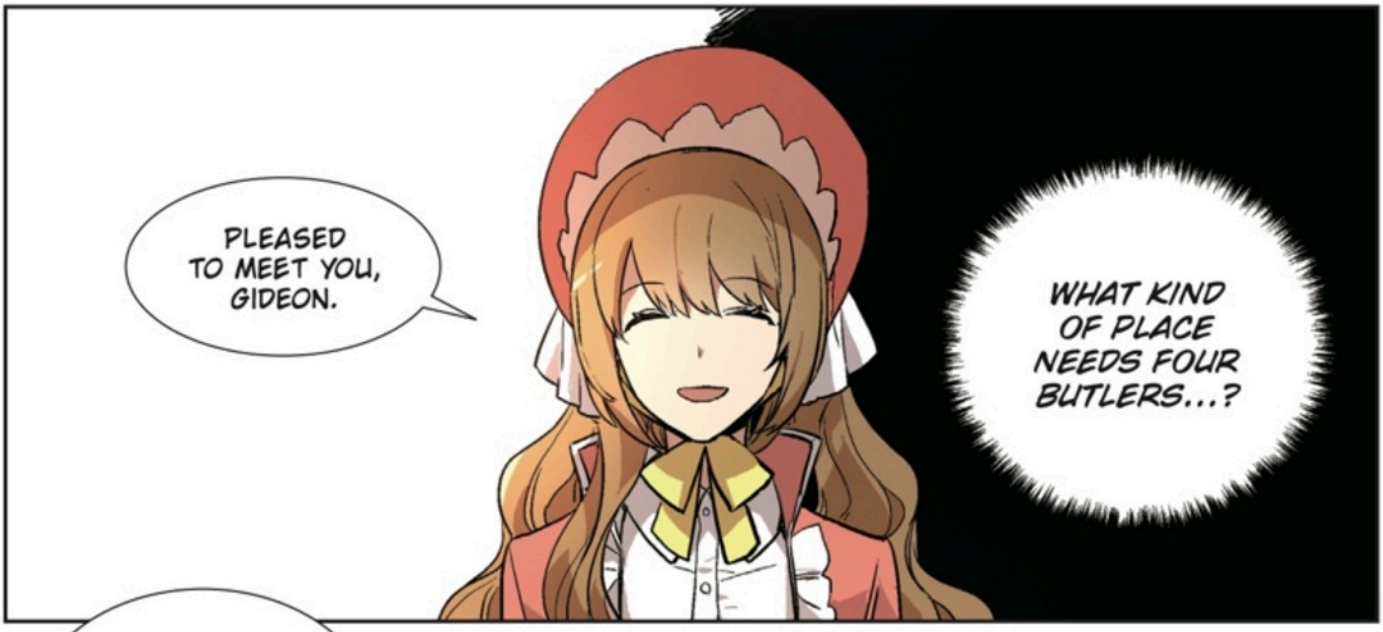
TAKE CARE, RAELIANA...


RATTLE
RATTLE

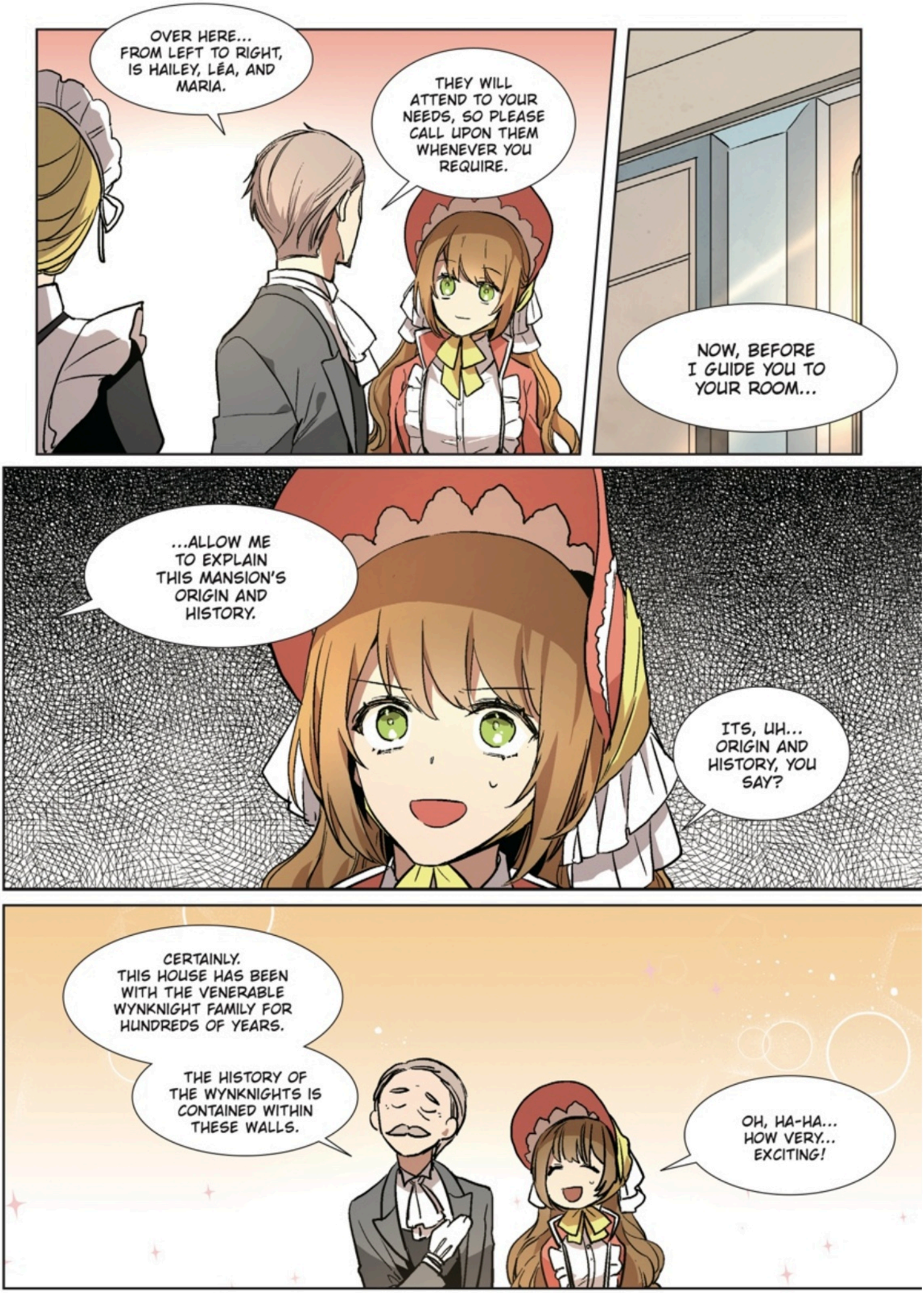


TAK


WELCOME, LADY McMILLAN.
I AM GIDEON JURA, THE HEAD BUTLER. YOU MAY CALL ME GIDEON.


PLEASED TO MEET YOU, GIDEON.
WHAT KIND OF PLACE NEEDS FOUR BUTLERS...?

THE STAFF SHALL SEE TO YOUR BAGGAGE.
THANK YOU. THAT'S VERY KIND.


OVER HERE... FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, IS HAILEY, LÉA, AND MARIA.
THEY WILL ATTEND TO YOUR NEEDS, SO PLEASE CALL UPON THEM WHENEVER YOU REQUIRE.
NOW, BEFORE I GUIDE YOU TO YOUR ROOM...
...ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN THIS MANSION'S ORIGIN AND HISTORY.
ITS, UH... ORIGIN AND HISTORY, YOU SAY?
CERTAINLY. THIS HOUSE HAS BEEN WITH THE VENERABLE WYNKNIGHT FAMILY FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS.
THE HISTORY OF THE WYNKNIGHTS IS CONTAINED WITHIN THESE WALLS.
OH, HA-HA... HOW VERY... EXCITING!

NOW LET US BEGIN.

NOW I'M HISTORY...

WAS THAT A HAZING RITUAL FOR THE NEWBIE? WAS HE GETTING TERRITORIAL? "THE LIKES OF YOU WITH THE DUKE?!"

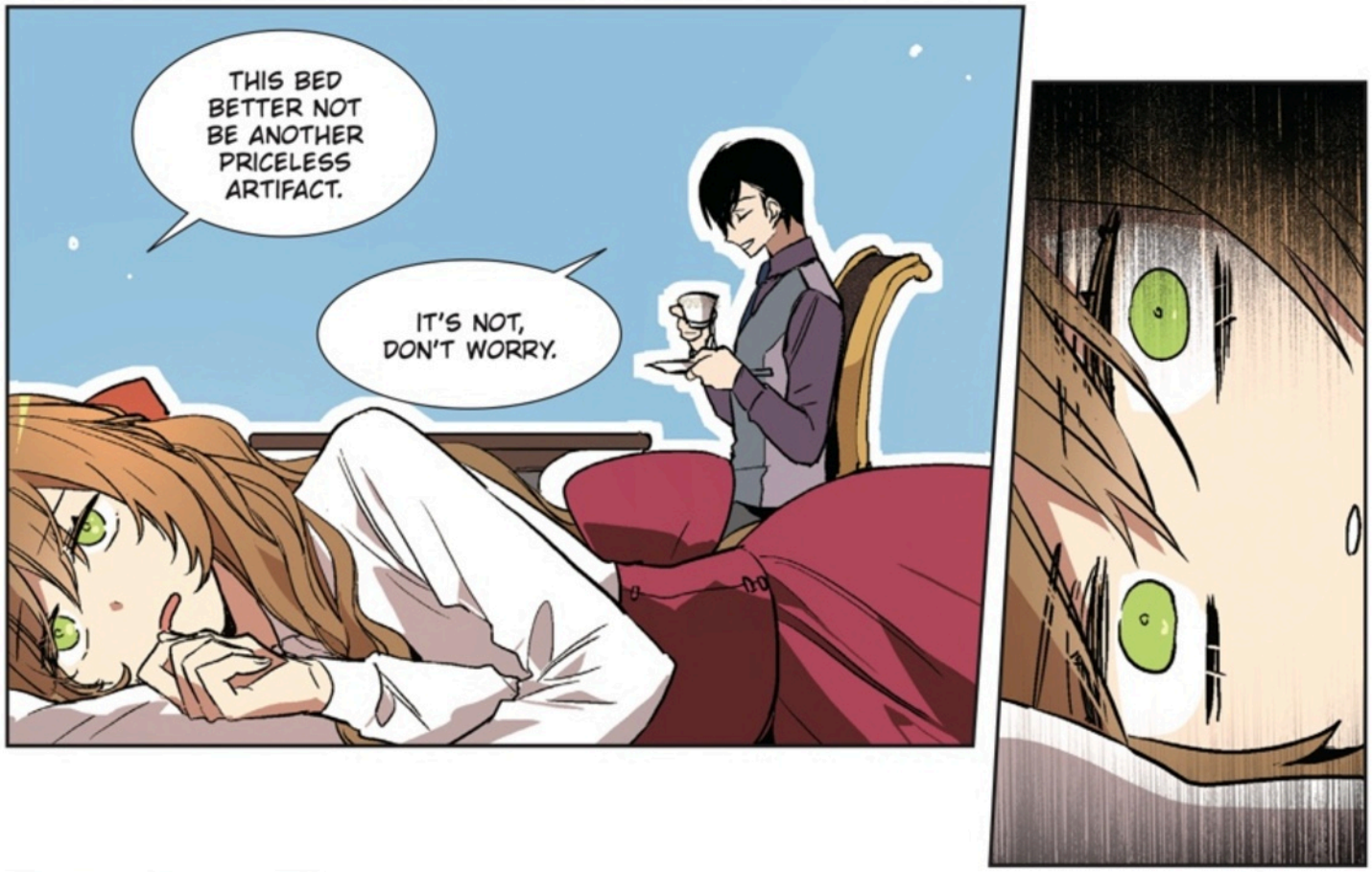
SOMETHING LIKE THAT? "I'VE RAISED THE DUKE LIKE HE WERE MY OWN SON...

"...I'LL MAKE SURE YOU KNOW HOW UNWORTHY OF HIM YOU ARE!" OR WHATEVER?

BY WHOM THIS HOUSE WAS BESTOWED, HOW EVERY INCH OF ITS DESIGN HAS REMARKABLE VALUE...

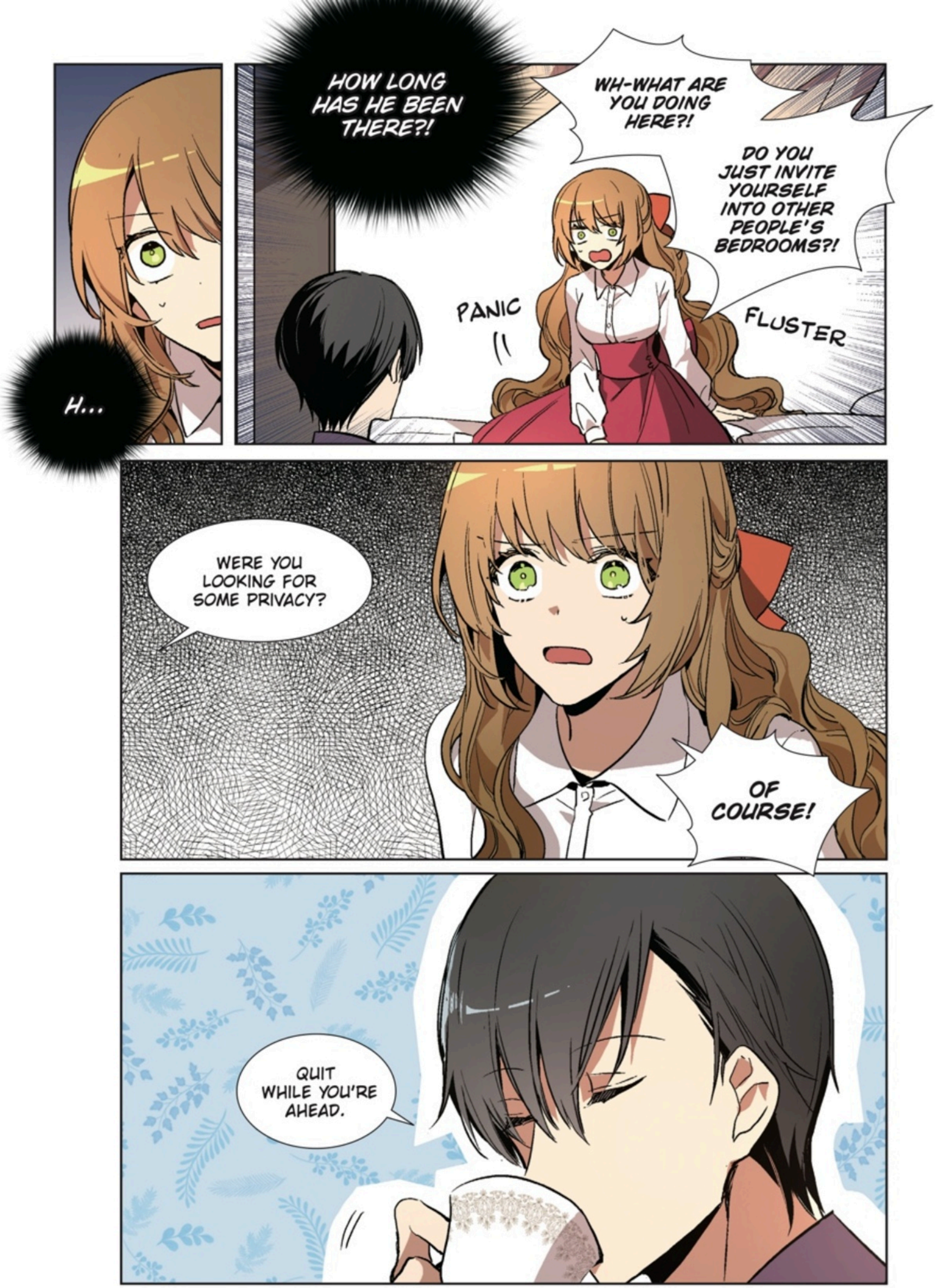
...HOW ITS ARCHITECT'S HARD WORK INFLUENCED LATER GENERATIONS OF DESIGNERS... WHY ON EARTH DO I HAVE TO KNOW ALL OF THIS?!

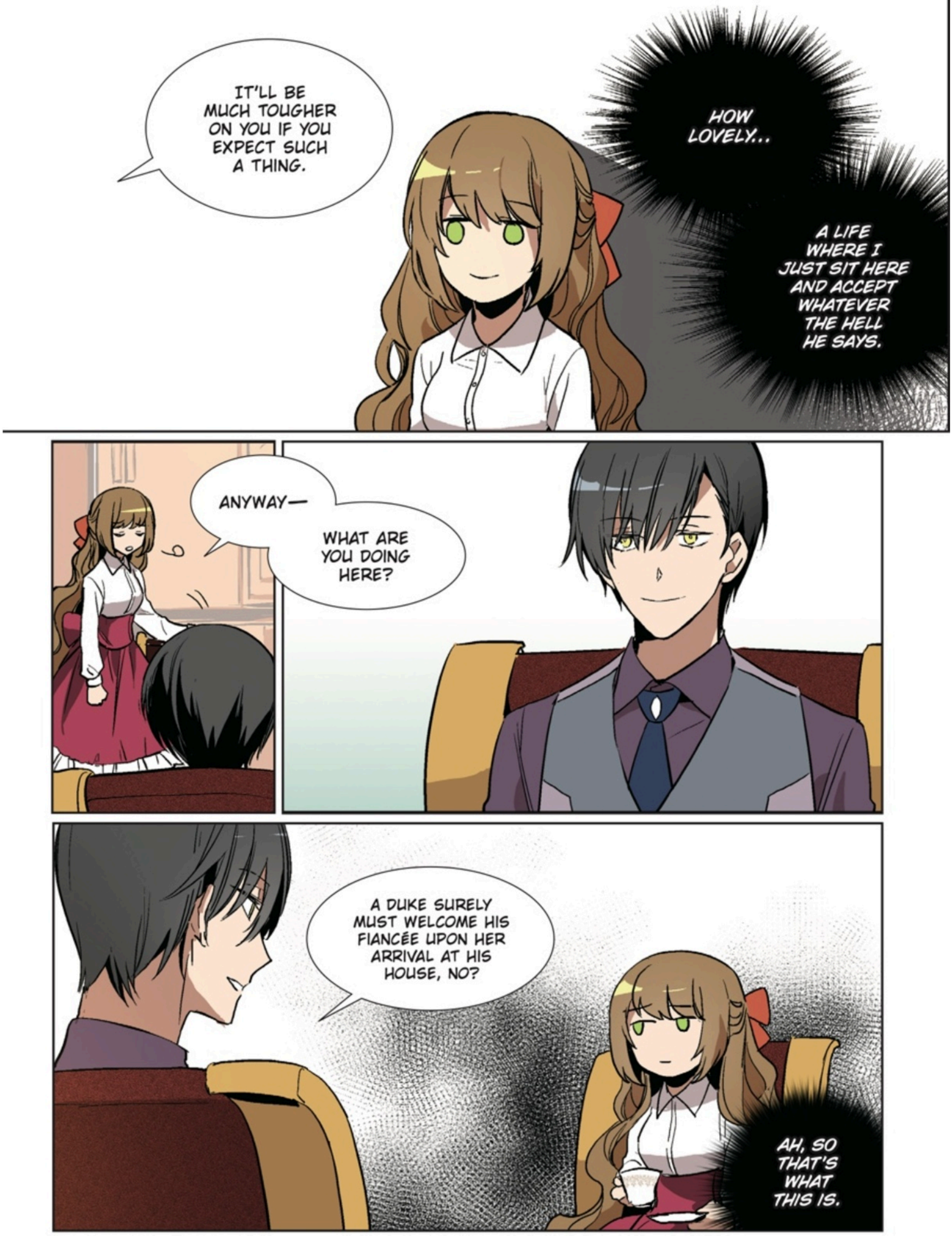
HAAH...

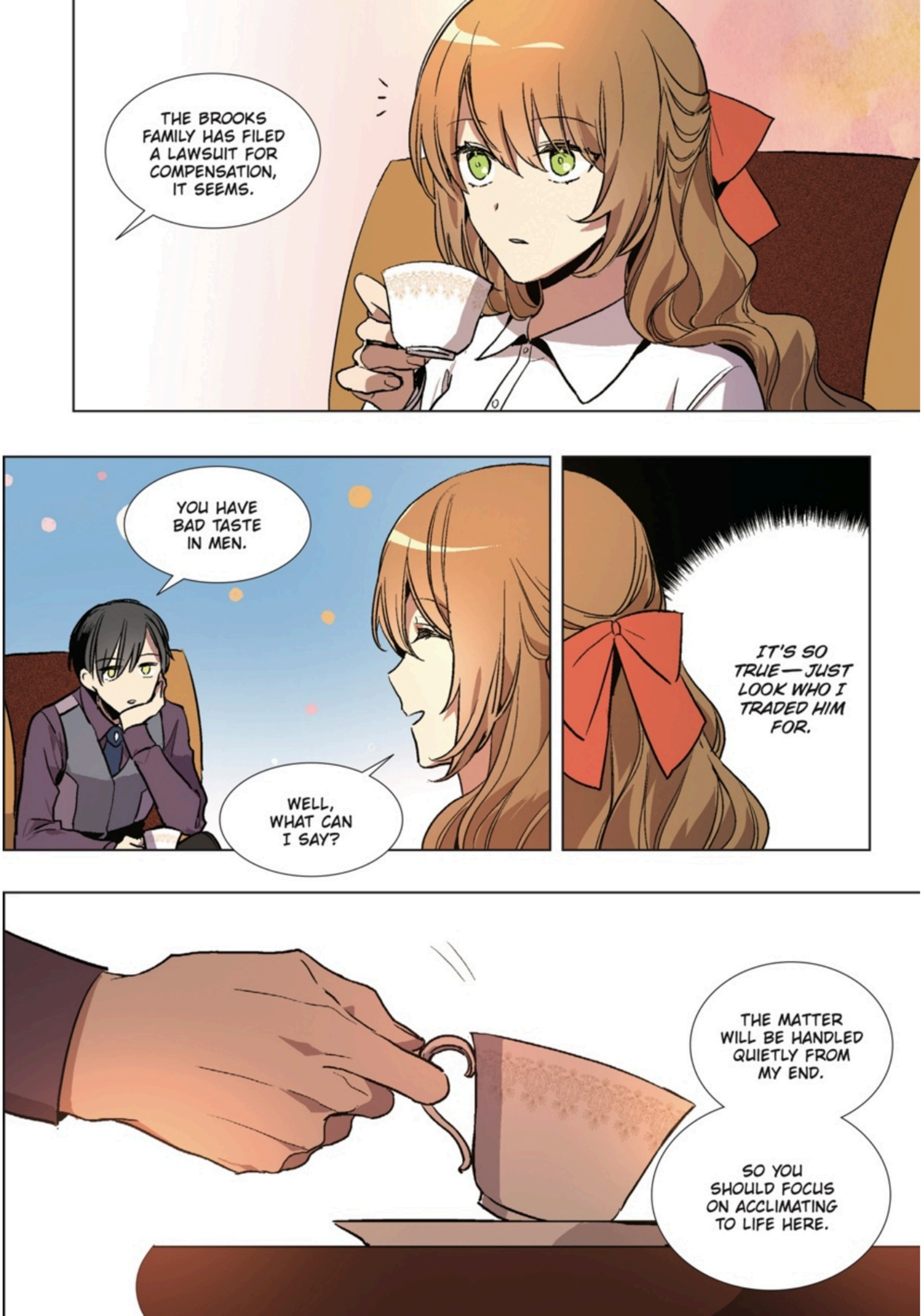

THIS BED BETTER NOT BE ANOTHER PRICELESS ARTIFACT.
IT'S NOT, DON'T WORRY.

JOLT

DRINK?
RAISE


H...
HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN THERE?!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
DO YOU JUST INVITE YOURSELF INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S BEDROOMS?!
PANIC
FLUSTER
WERE YOU LOOKING FOR SOME PRIVACY?
OF COURSE!
QUIT WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD.


IT'LL BE MUCH TOUGHER ON YOU IF YOU EXPECT SUCH A THING.
HOW LOVELY...
A LIFE WHERE I JUST SIT HERE AND ACCEPT WHATEVER THE HELL HE SAYS.
ANYWAY—
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
A DUKE SURELY MUST WELCOME HIS FIANCÉE UPON HER ARRIVAL AT HIS HOUSE, NO?
AH, SO THAT'S WHAT THIS IS.

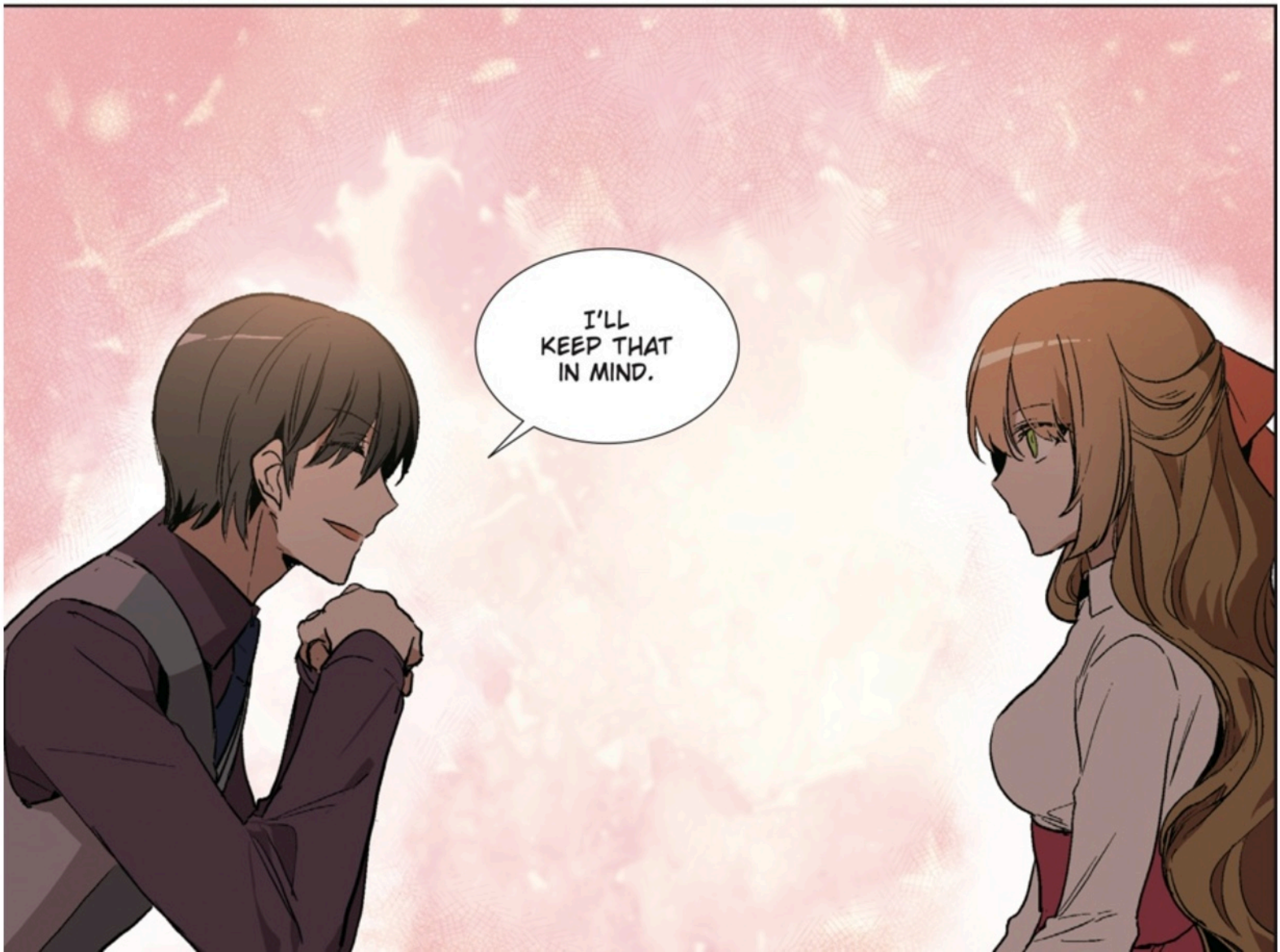

THE BROOKS FAMILY HAS FILED A LAWSUIT FOR COMPENSATION, IT SEEMS.
YOU HAVE BAD TASTE IN MEN.
WELL, WHAT CAN I SAY?
IT'S SO TRUE — JUST LOOK WHO I TRADED HIM FOR.
THE MATTER WILL BE HANDLED QUIETLY FROM MY END.
SO YOU SHOULD FOCUS ON ACCLIMATING TO LIFE HERE.

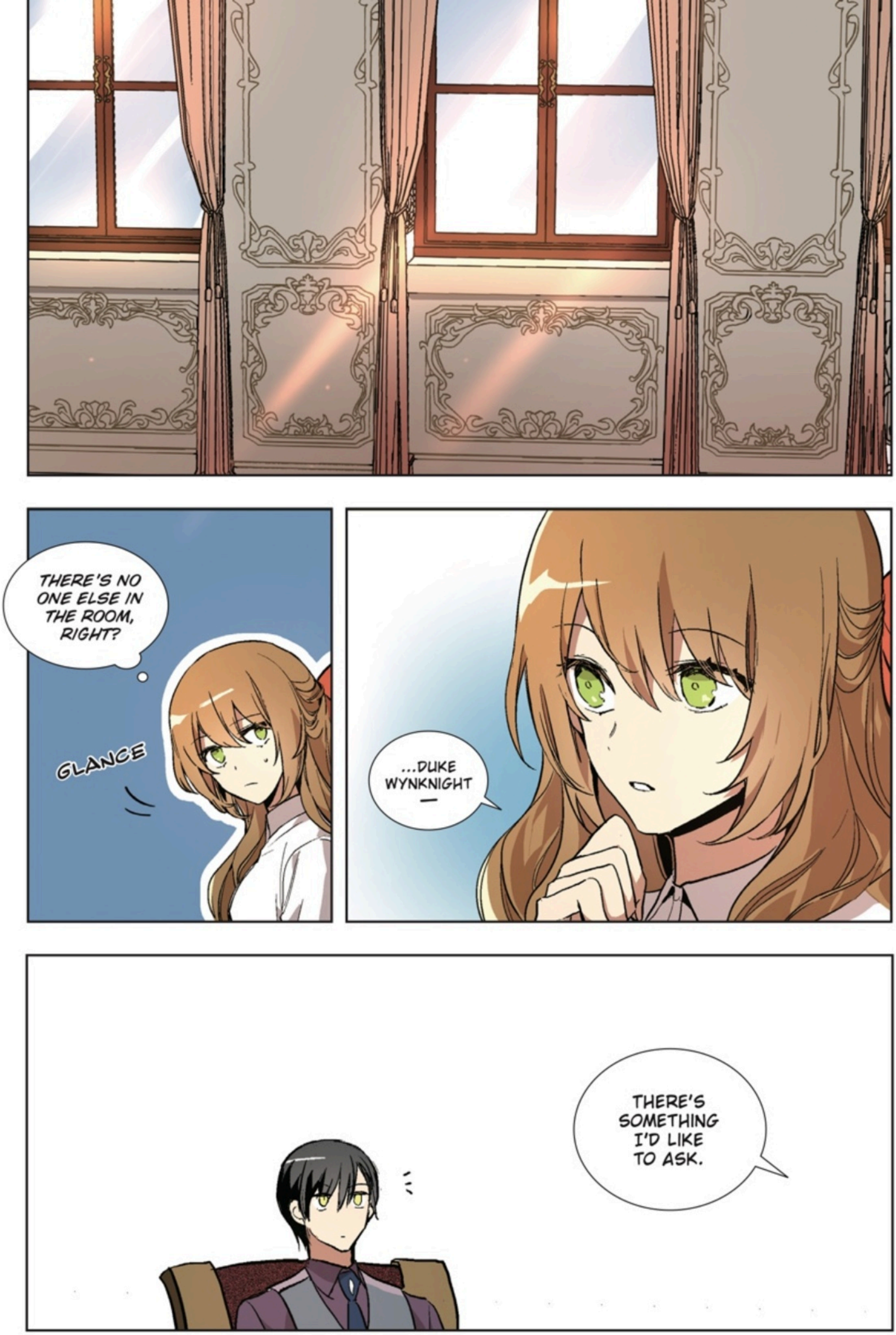
TOMORROW, YOUR CLASSES WILL BEGIN IN EARNEST.
YOU NEEDN'T EXCEL—JUST PLAY YOUR ROLE WELL.
. . .
WHEN DID I SAY I WANTED TO EXCEL?
WELL, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF BECOMING YOUR PERFECT FIANCÉE.
CLACK
LIKEWISE, DUKE WYNKNIGHT, I HAVE NO NEED FOR YOU TO BE MY PERFECT FIANCÉ.

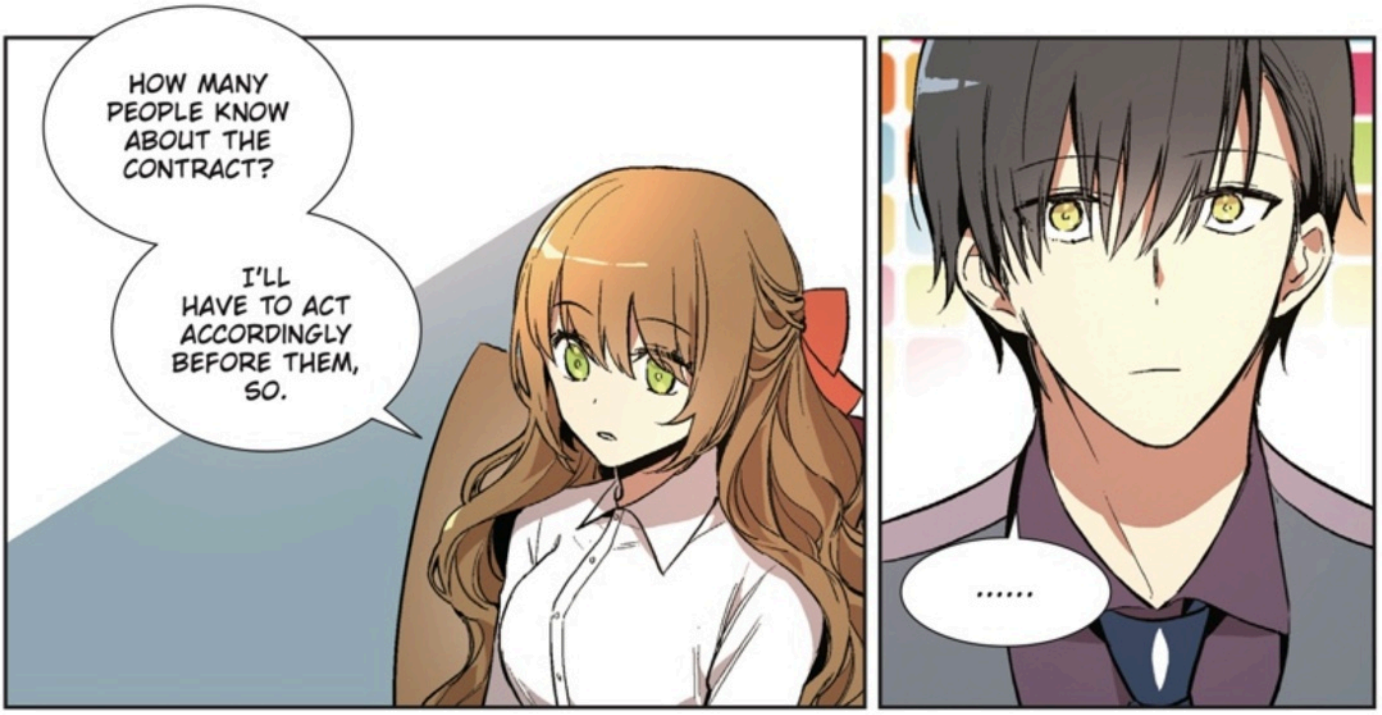
JUST TRY TO PLAY YOUR ROLE WELL.

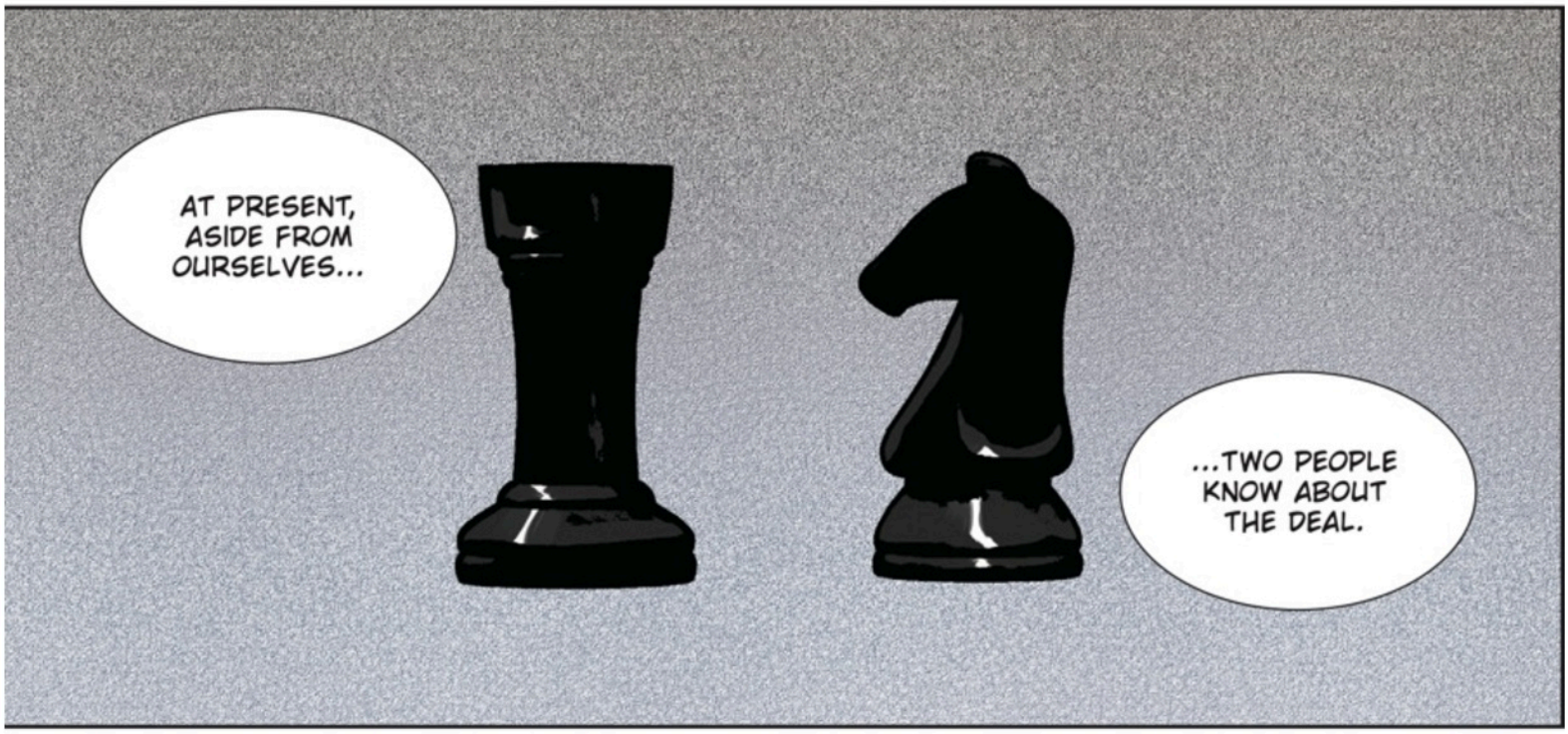
HEH.

VERY WELL.

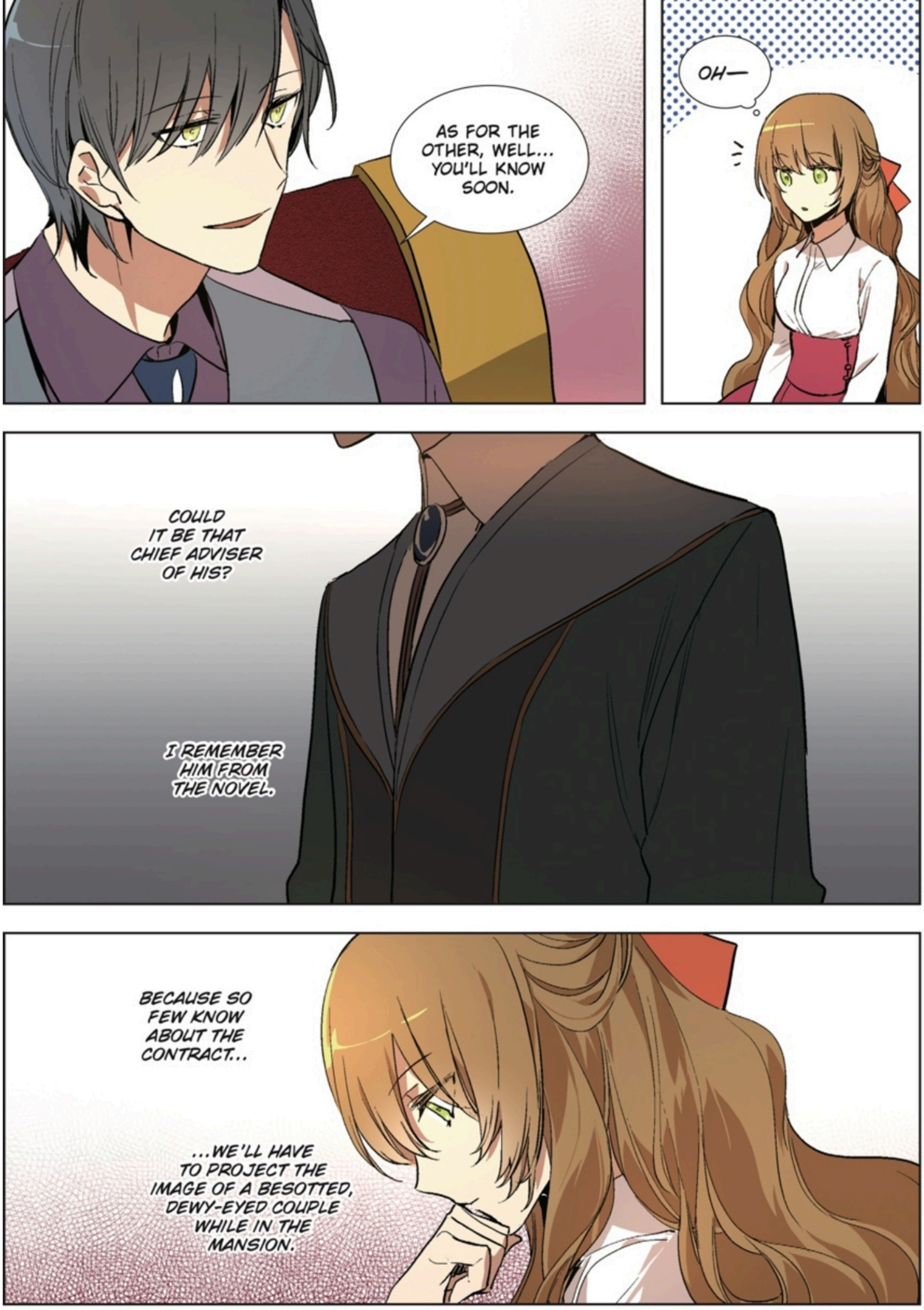

I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND.

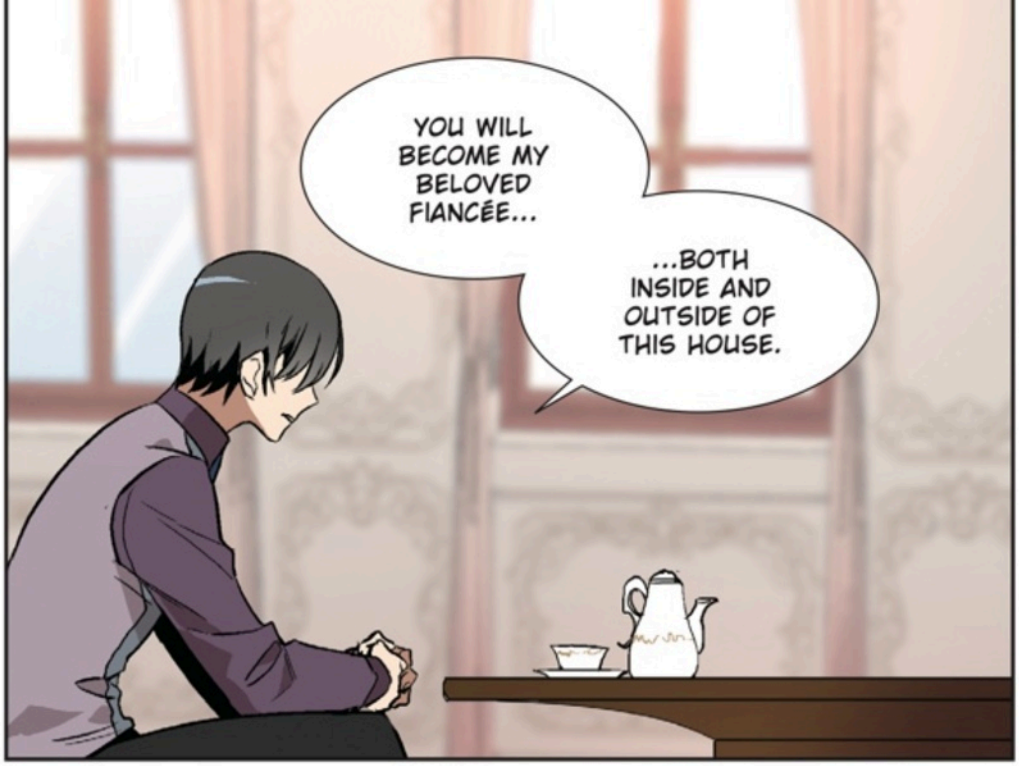

THERE'S NO ONE ELSE IN THE ROOM, RIGHT?
GLANCE
...DUKE WYNKNIGHT —
THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO ASK.


HOW MANY PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THE CONTRACT?
I'LL HAVE TO ACT ACCORDINGLY BEFORE THEM, SO.
.....


AT PRESENT, ASIDE FROM OURSELVES...
...TWO PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THE DEAL.

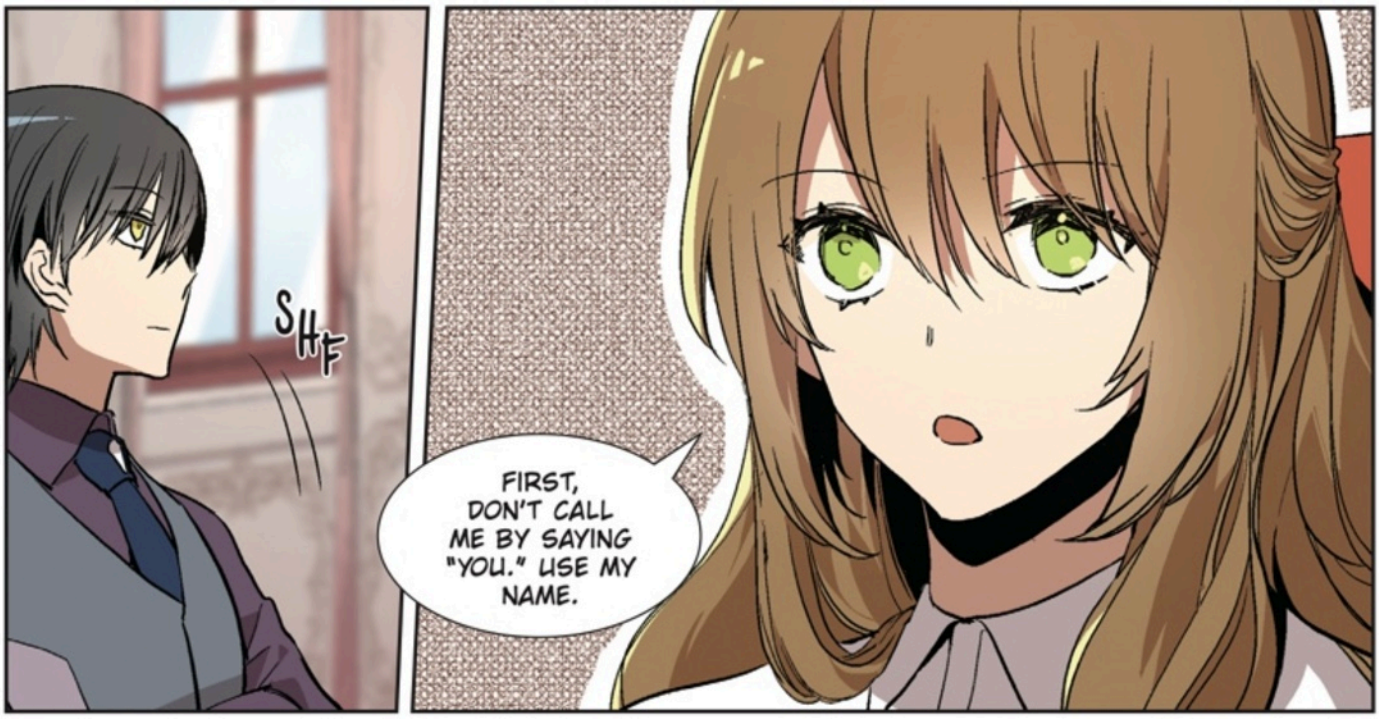
ONE OF THEM IS IN THIS MANSION RIGHT NOW.
SIR TAYLOR?
CORRECT.


AS FOR THE OTHER, WELL... YOU'LL KNOW SOON.
OH—
COULD IT BE THAT CHIEF ADVISER OF HIS?
I REMEMBER HIM FROM THE NOVEL.
BECAUSE SO FEW KNOW ABOUT THE CONTRACT...
...WE'LL HAVE TO PROJECT THE IMAGE OF A BESOTTED, DEWY-EYED COUPLE WHILE IN THE MANSION.


YOU WILL BECOME MY BELOVED FIANCÉE...
...BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF THIS HOUSE.

HOLD ON! JUST WAIT A MINUTE.
WHAT?

THE CONTRACT...
...FAILED TO COVER A FEW DETAILS THAT STILL NEED RESOLVING.


SHF
FIRST, DON'T CALL ME BY SAYING "YOU." USE MY NAME.

DULY NOTED...
...RAELIANA.
AND WHILE I UNDERSTAND YOU'LL HAVE YOUR SUSPICIONS ABOUT ME...
...AT THE VERY LEAST, I NEED TO BE GIVEN PRIVACY INSIDE THIS ROOM.
AND IF I DON'T?
I HOPE YOU KNOW I'M BEING AS ACCOMMODATING AS I CAN IN THIS MATTER.
HMM... ALL RIGHT, THEN.
CLICK

AND WITH THAT, LET'S END THIS FUN LITTLE MEETING.

RISE

YOU FOUND IT FUN?

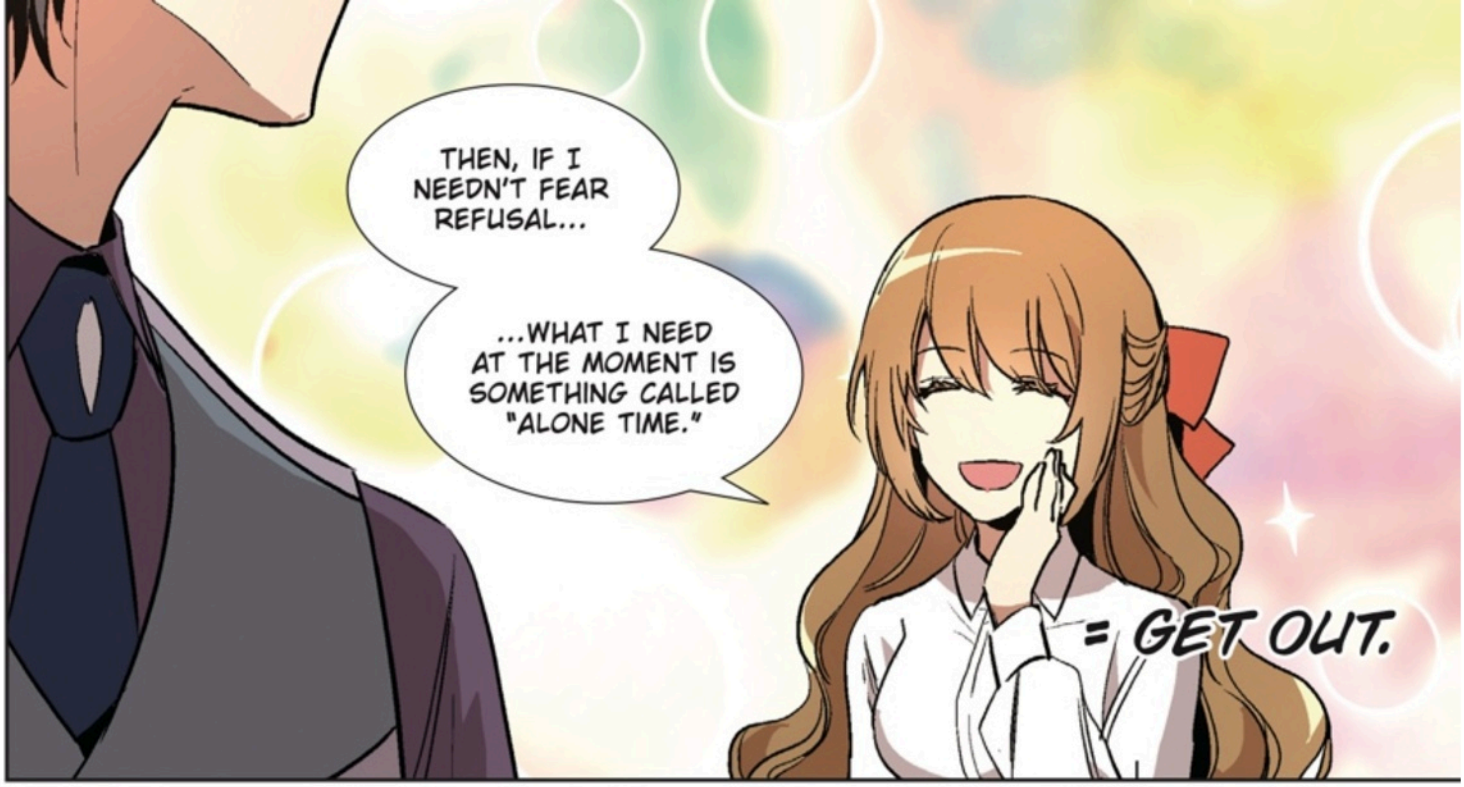
THAT MAKES ONE OF US.

AH YES.

IF YOU NEED ANYTHING WHATSOEVER, DON'T HESITATE. JUST ASK, ***RAELIANA***.

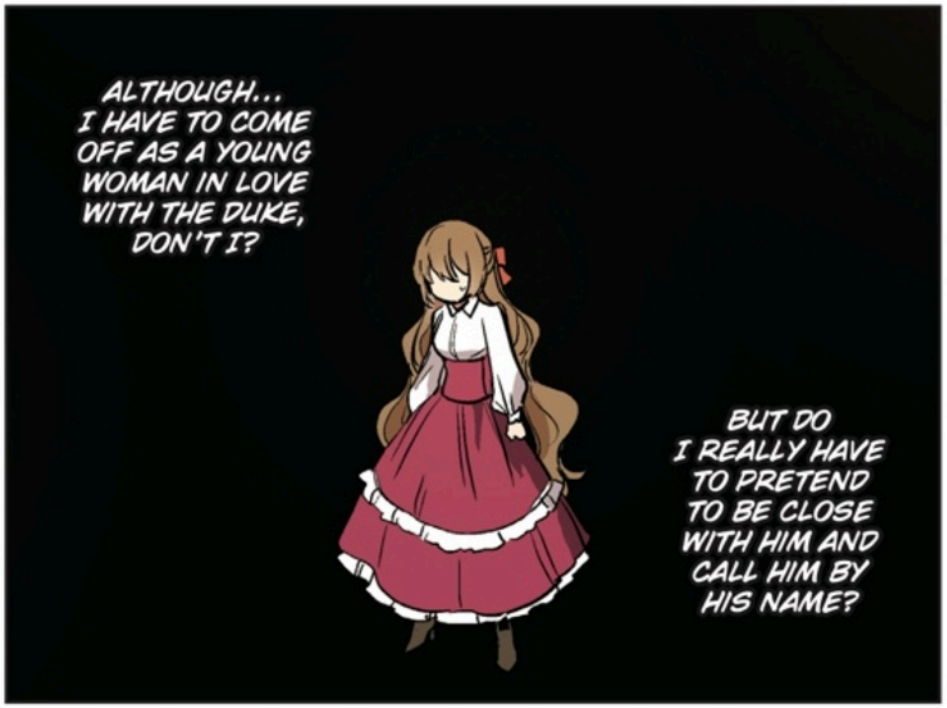
NOTHING IS BEYOND THE CAPACITY OF THE DUCAL ESTATE, AFTER ALL.

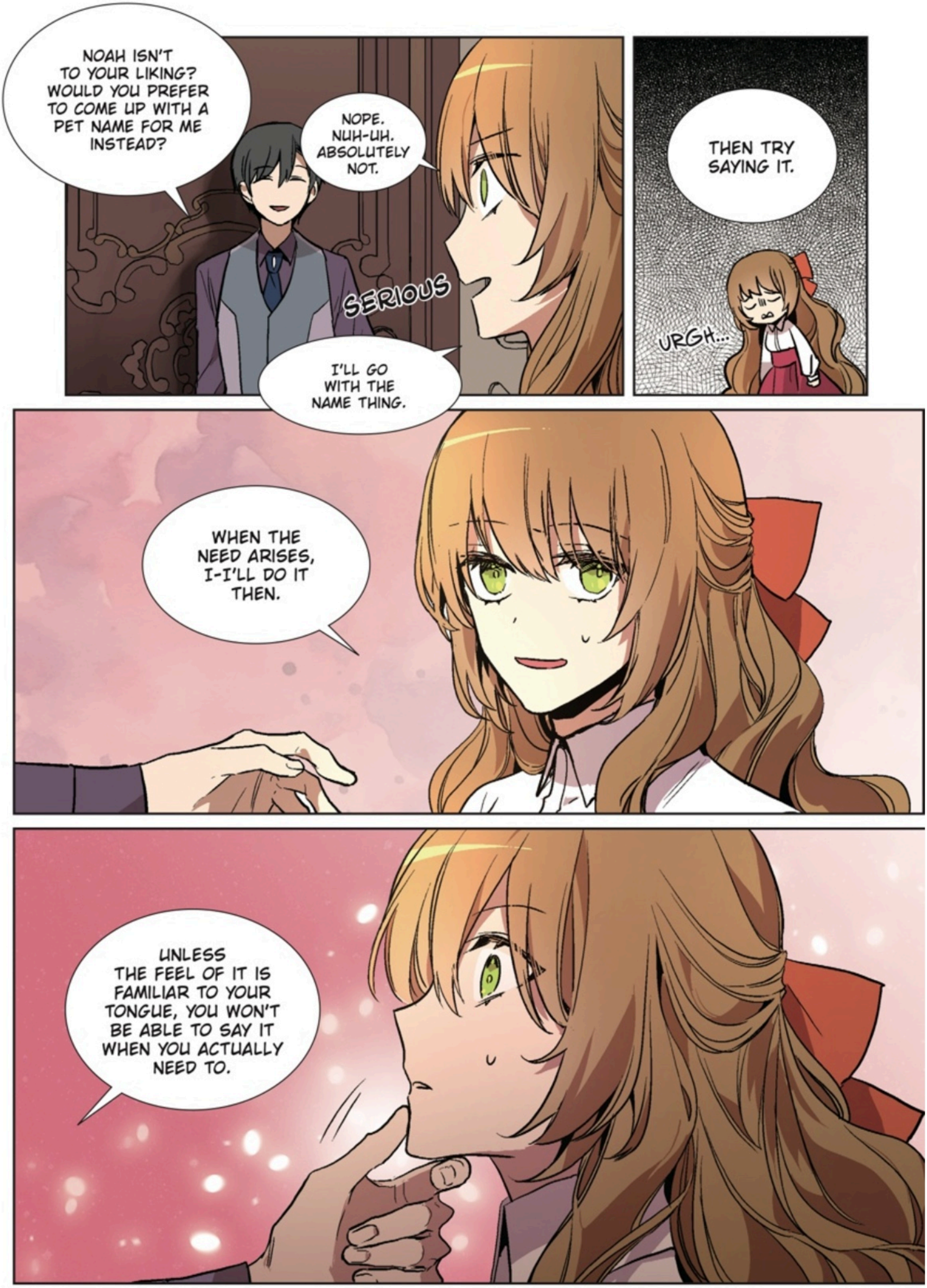
SUCH KINDNESS ON MY BEHALF ALMOST BRINGS TEARS TO MY EYES, DUKE WYNKNIGHT.


THEN, IF I NEEDN'T FEAR REFUSAL...
...WHAT I NEED AT THE MOMENT IS SOMETHING CALLED "ALONE TIME."
= GET OUT.

SURELY, YOU SHOULD ADDRESS YOUR FIANCÉ AS NOAH, NOT DUKE WYNKNIGHT...
...MY DEAR RAELIANA.

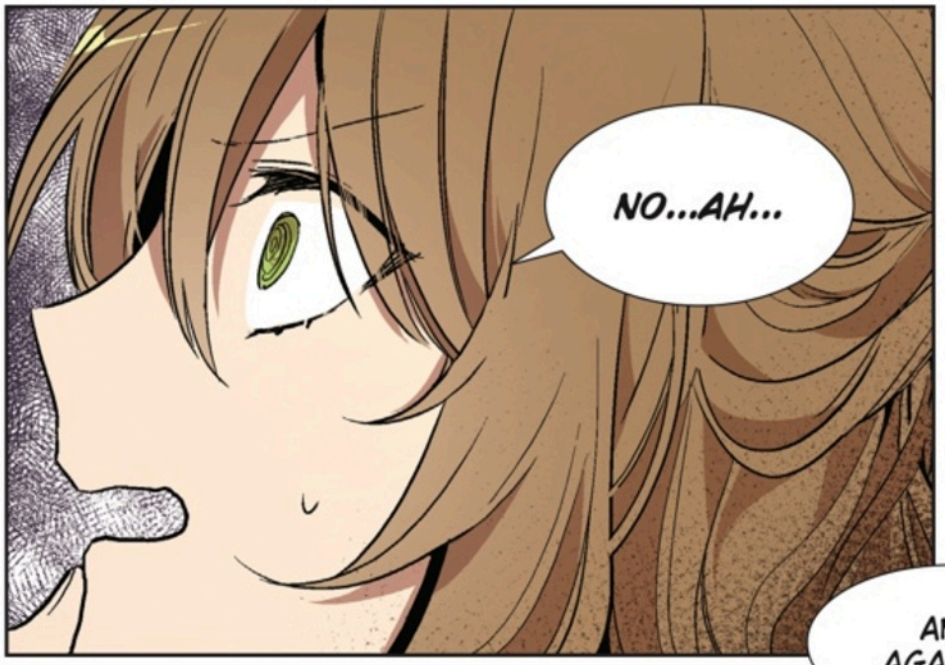
EWGHooo
SHUDDER


ALTHOUGH... I HAVE TO COME OFF AS A YOUNG WOMAN IN LOVE WITH THE DUKE, DON'T I?
BUT DO I REALLY HAVE TO PRETEND TO BE CLOSE WITH HIM AND CALL HIM BY HIS NAME?

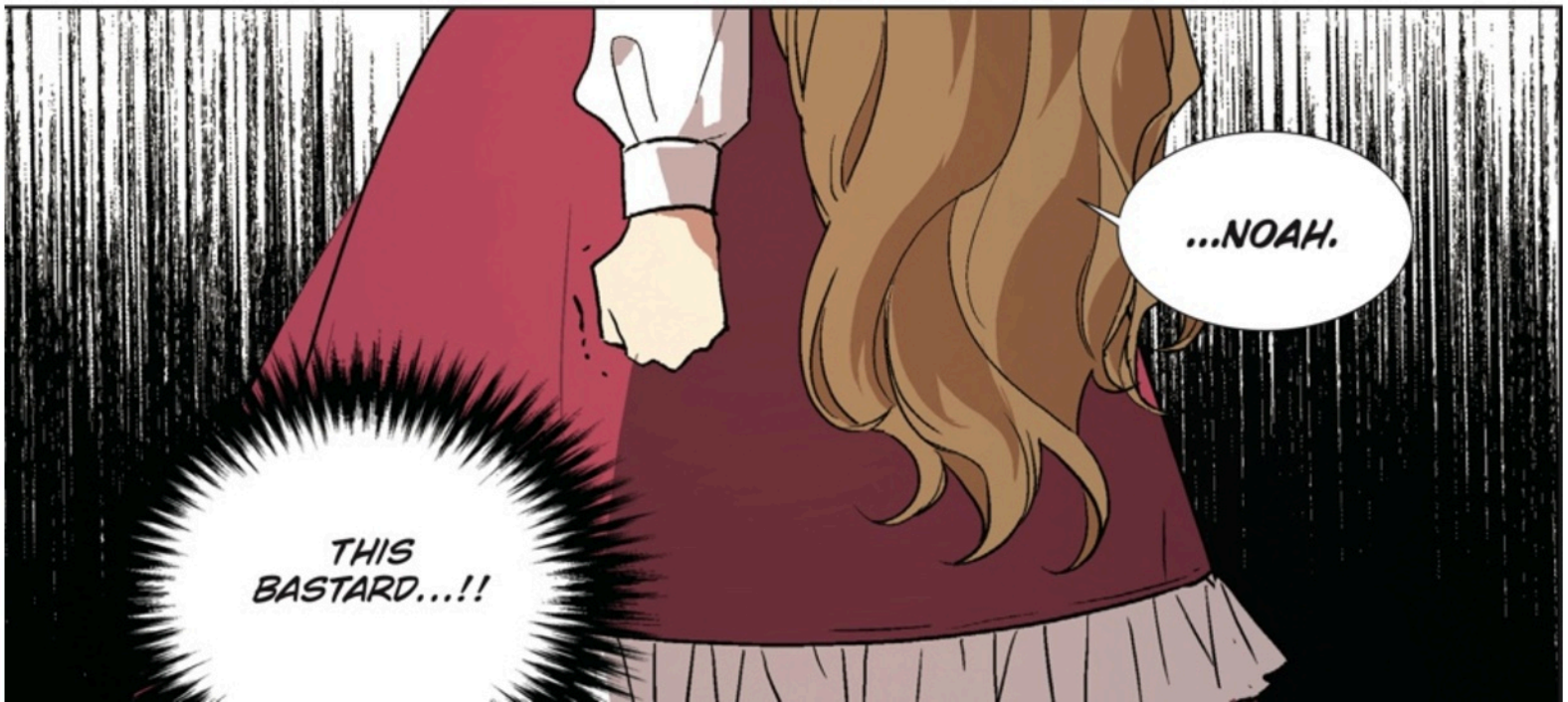

NOAH ISN'T TO YOUR LIKING? WOULD YOU PREFER TO COME UP WITH A PET NAME FOR ME INSTEAD?
NOPE. NUH-UH. ABSOLUTELY NOT.
SERIOUS
I'LL GO WITH THE NAME THING.
THEN TRY SAYING IT.
URGH...
WHEN THE NEED ARISES, I-I'LL DO IT THEN.
UNLESS THE FEEL OF IT IS FAMILIAR TO YOUR TONGUE, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SAY IT WHEN YOU ACTUALLY NEED TO.

NOW—
WHAT IS MY
NAME?
N-N...

QUICKLY NOW.
N...


NO...AH...

AND AGAIN—


...NOAH.
THIS BASTARD...!!

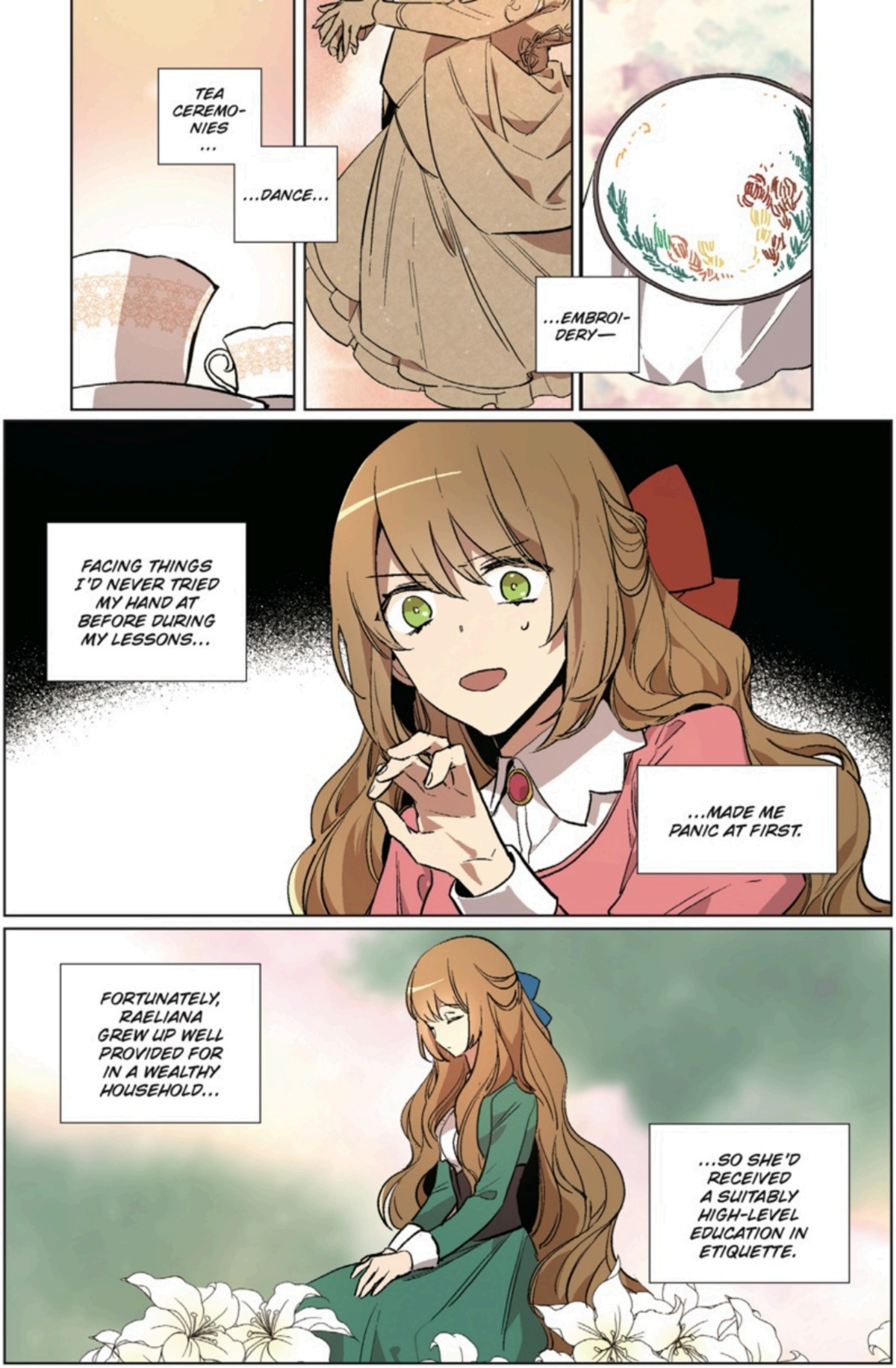
CHUCKLE
WELL DONE.
OH, JUST NOW...
THEN I'LL BE GOING.
CREAK

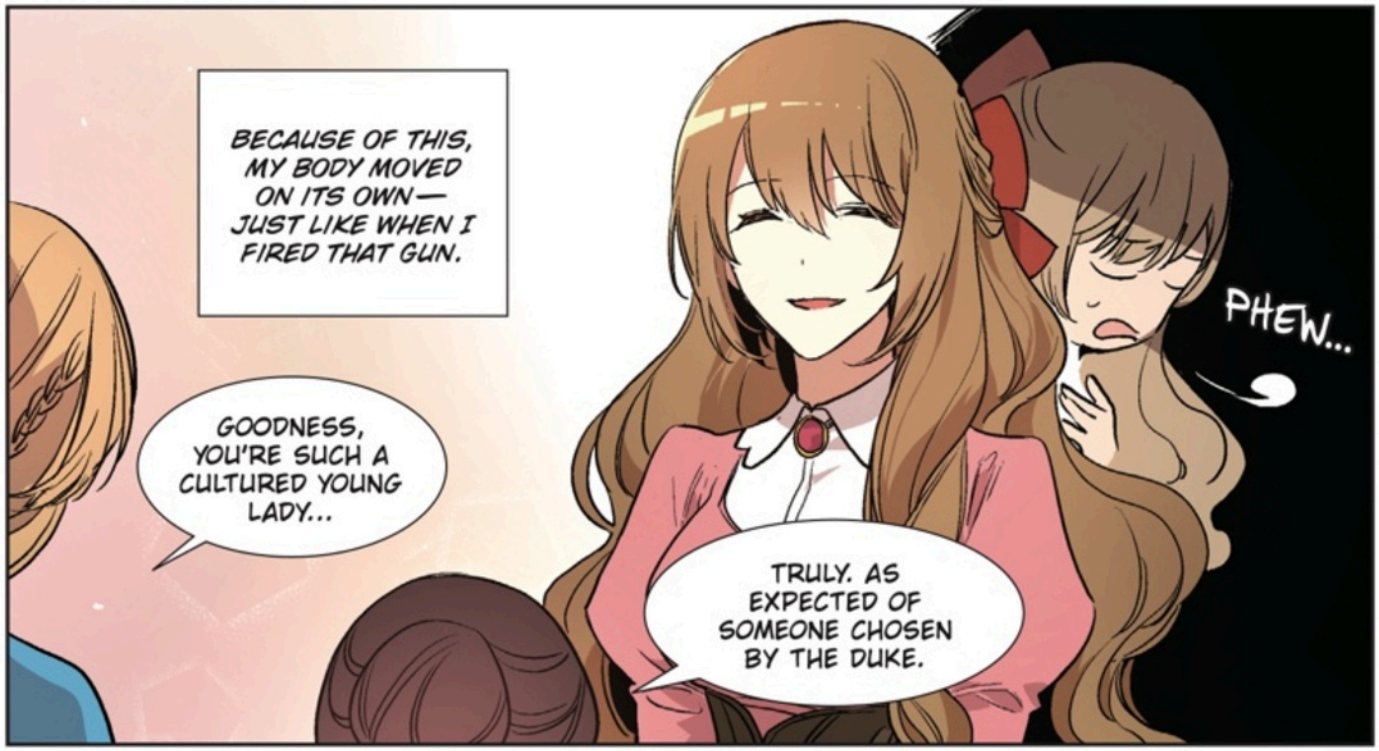
TAK
PFFT!
HEE HEE!
.....?

ADAM, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HER?
.....
WHERE HE'S FROM DOESN'T MATTER.
...AN ODD WOMAN.

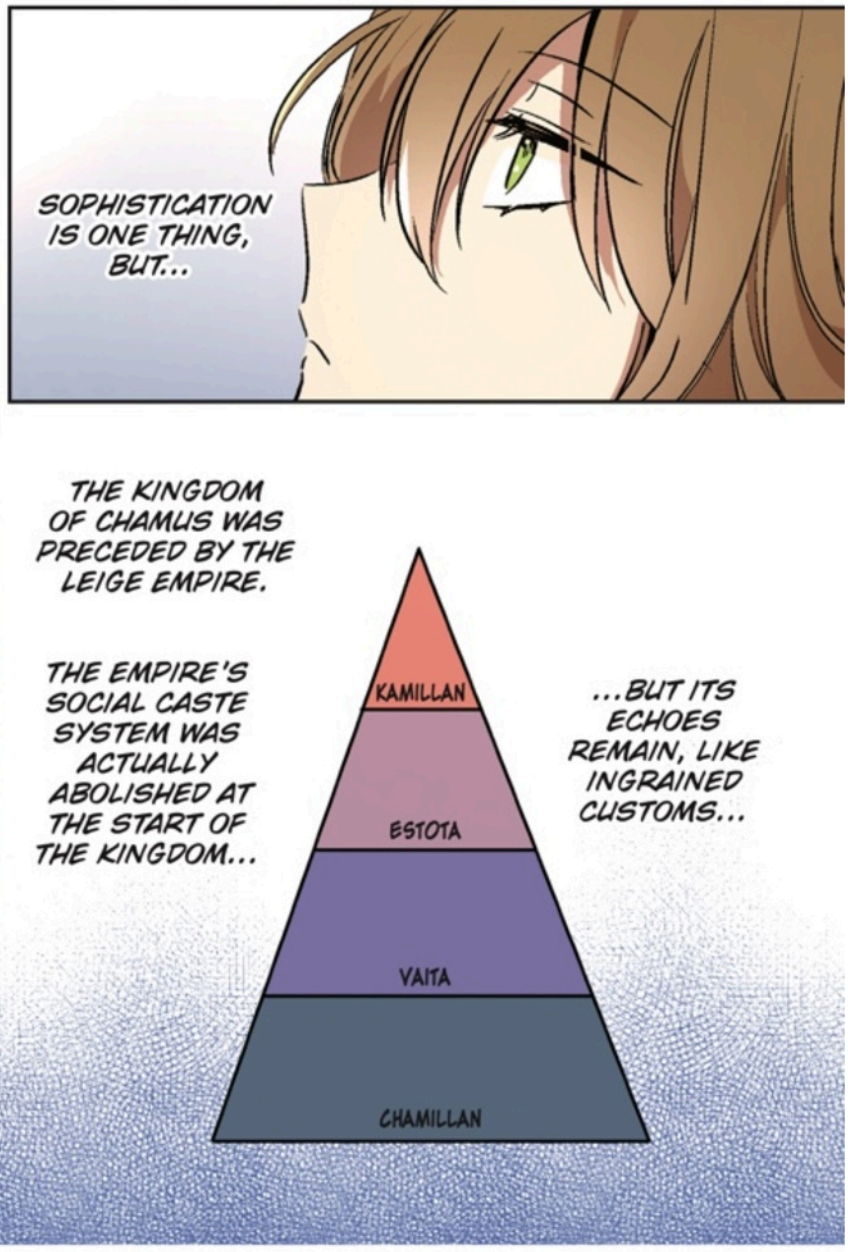
.....?
A GENEROUS APPRAISAL FROM ADAM.
WAS SHE TO HIS LIKING?
MMPH.
AN ODD WOMAN...
KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON HER.
SHF
IS HE FEELING OKAY?

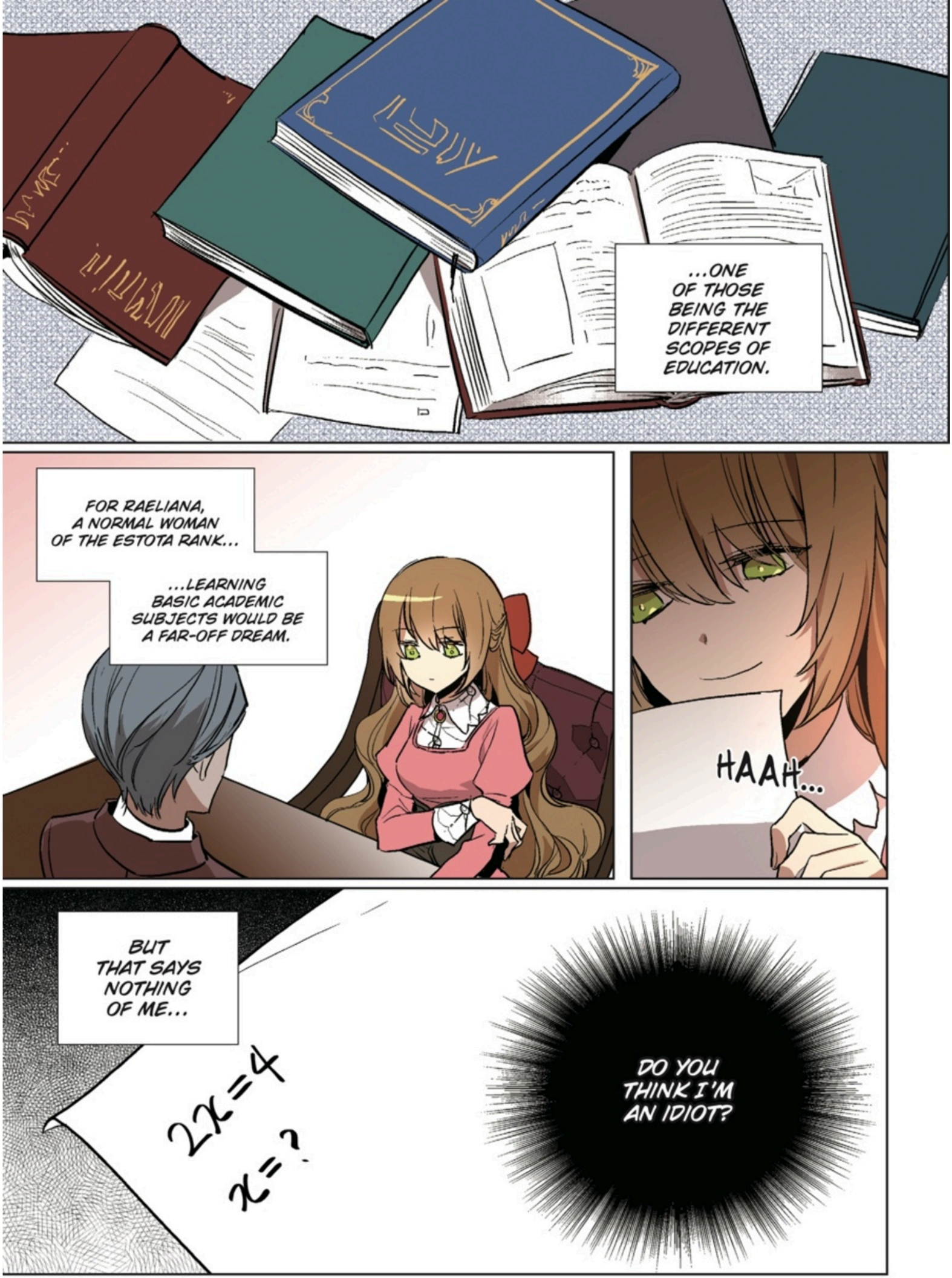
Why Raeliana Ended Up at the Duke's Mansion


TEA CEREMO-NIES ...
...DANCE...
...EMBROI-DERY—
FACING THINGS I'D NEVER TRIED MY HAND AT BEFORE DURING MY LESSONS...
...MADE ME PANIC AT FIRST.
FORTUNATELY, RAELIANA GREW UP WELL PROVIDED FOR IN A WEALTHY HOUSEHOLD...
...SO SHE'D RECEIVED A SUITABLY HIGH-LEVEL EDUCATION IN ETIQUETTE.


BECAUSE OF THIS, MY BODY MOVED ON ITS OWN— JUST LIKE WHEN I FIRED THAT GUN.
GOODNESS, YOU'RE SUCH A CULTURED YOUNG LADY...
TRULY. AS EXPECTED OF SOMEONE CHOSEN BY THE DUKE.
PHEW...

HAAH...


SOPHISTICATION IS ONE THING, BUT...
THE KINGDOM OF CHAMUS WAS PRECEDED BY THE LEIGE EMPIRE.
THE EMPIRE'S SOCIAL CASTE SYSTEM WAS ACTUALLY ABOLISHED AT THE START OF THE KINGDOM...
KAMILLAN
ESTOTA
VAITA
CHAMILLAN
...BUT ITS ECHOES REMAIN, LIKE INGRAINED CUSTOMS...

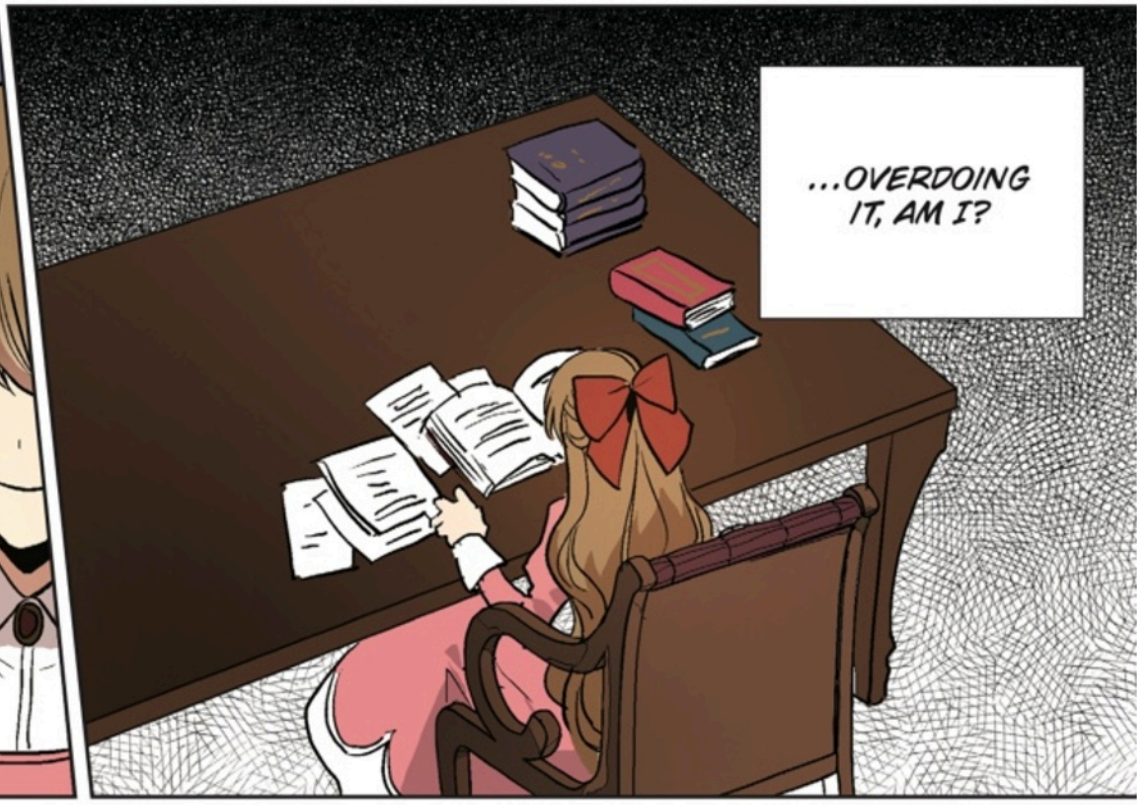

...ONE OF THOSE BEING THE DIFFERENT SCOPES OF EDUCATION.
FOR RAELIANA, A NORMAL WOMAN OF THE ESTOTA RANK...
...LEARNING BASIC ACADEMIC SUBJECTS WOULD BE A FAR-OFF DREAM.
HAAH...
BUT THAT SAYS NOTHING OF ME...
2x=4
x=?
DO YOU THINK I'M AN IDIOT?

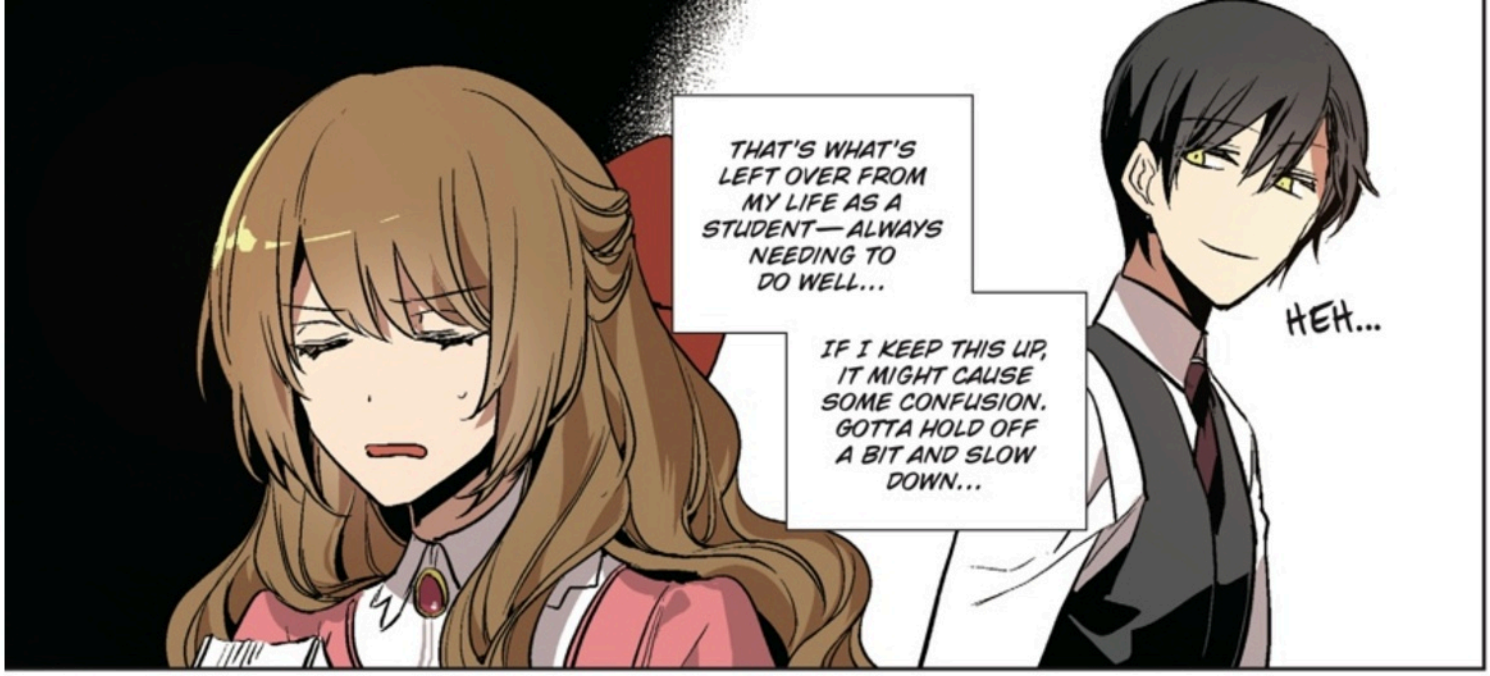
I JUST TOOK THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS.
THIS IS NOTHING...
SCRITCH

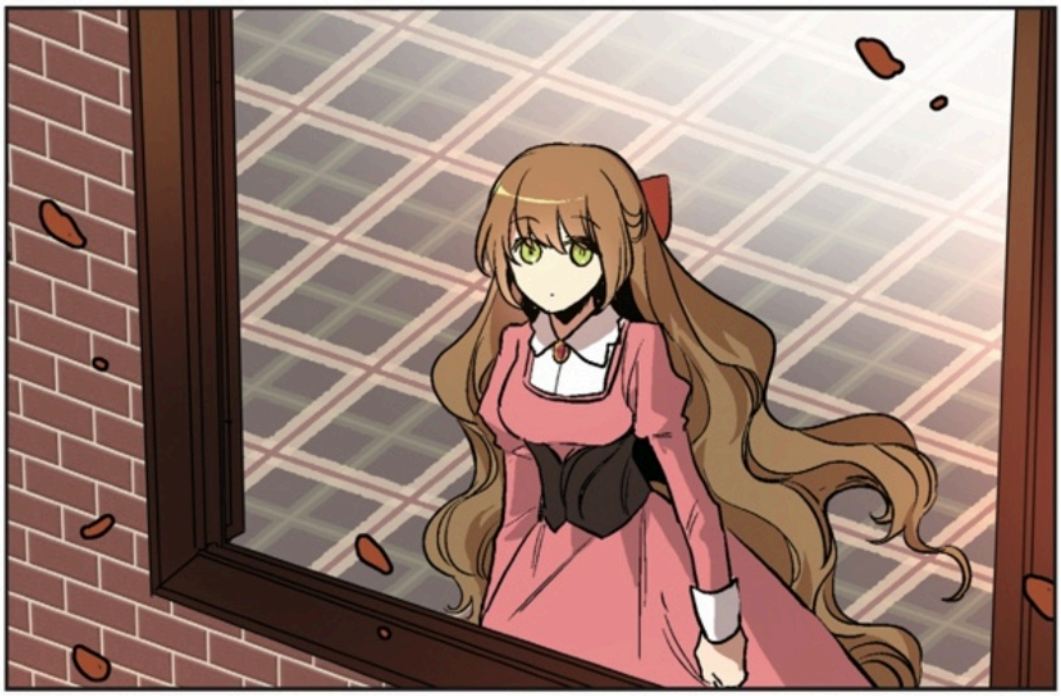
!!
ALL THAT'S LEFT...

...IS THE HISTORY OF THIS PLACE, WHICH ISN'T COVERED BY THE KNOWLEDGE FROM MY PREVIOUS LIFE.
THUNK

WAIT— I'M NOT...


...OVERDOING IT, AM I?


THAT'S WHAT'S LEFT OVER FROM MY LIFE AS A STUDENT—ALWAYS NEEDING TO DO WELL...
IF I KEEP THIS UP, IT MIGHT CAUSE SOME CONFUSION. GOTTA HOLD OFF A BIT AND SLOW DOWN...
HEH...

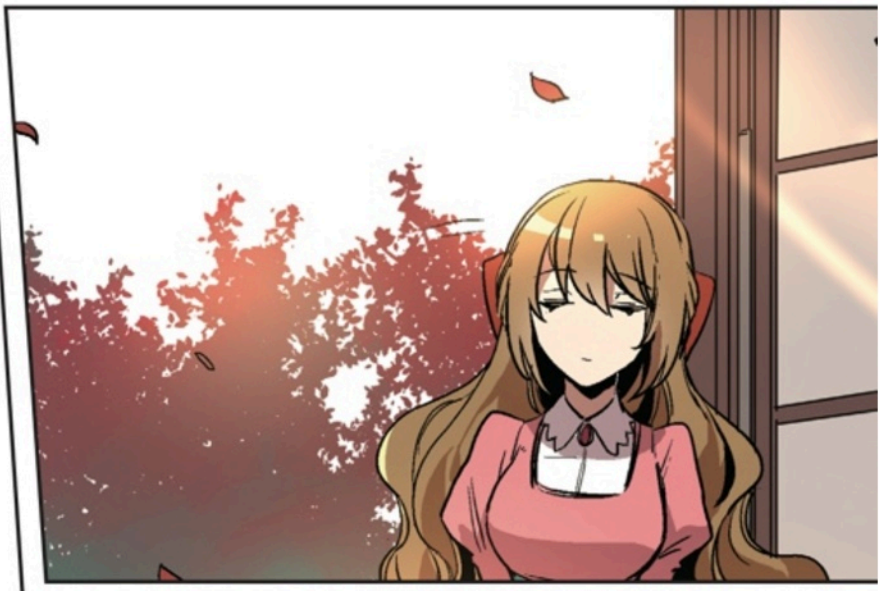


...IT'S AUTUMN NOW.

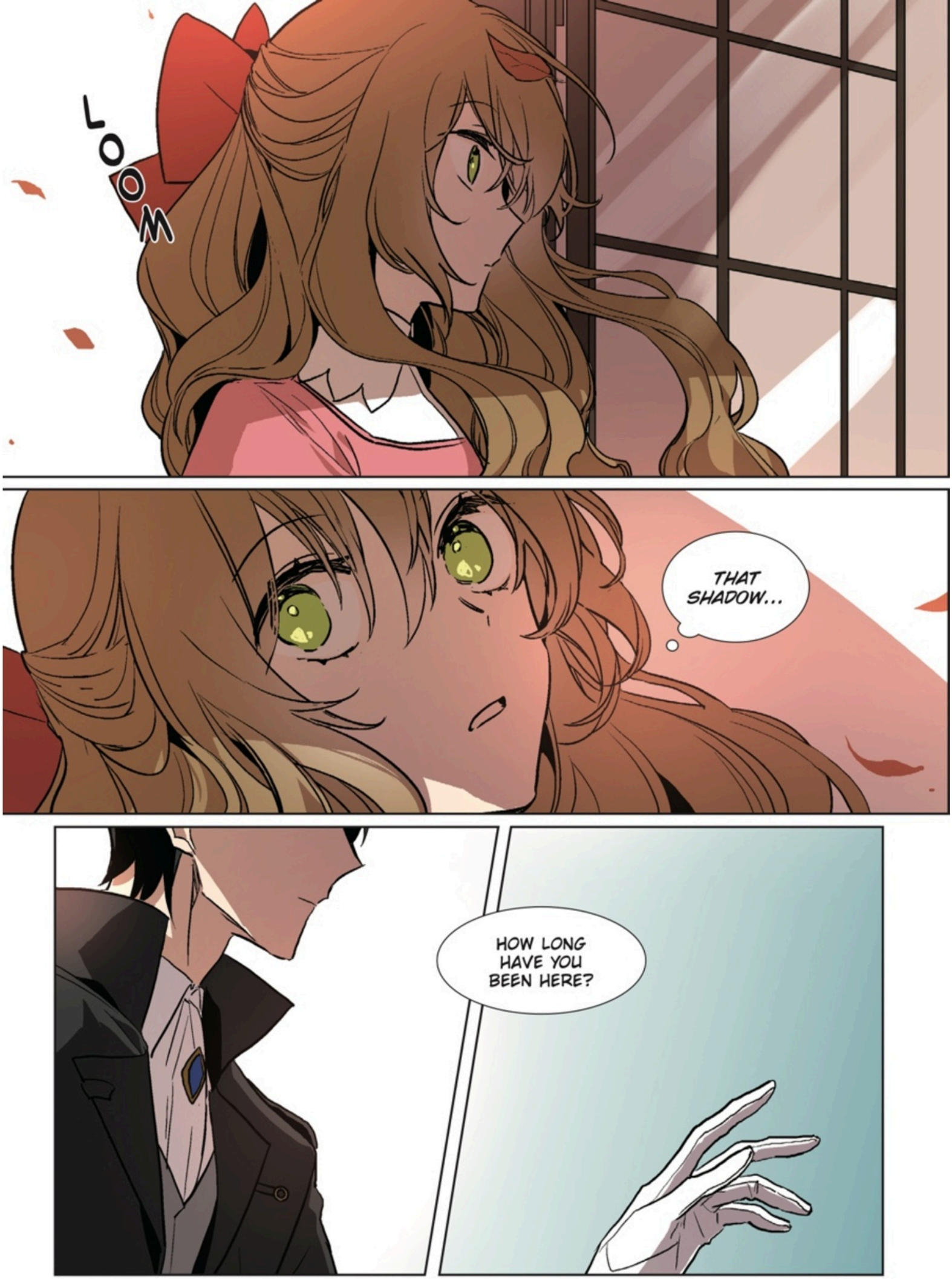
IT'S ALREADY BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE I CAME TO THE DUKE'S MANSION.....

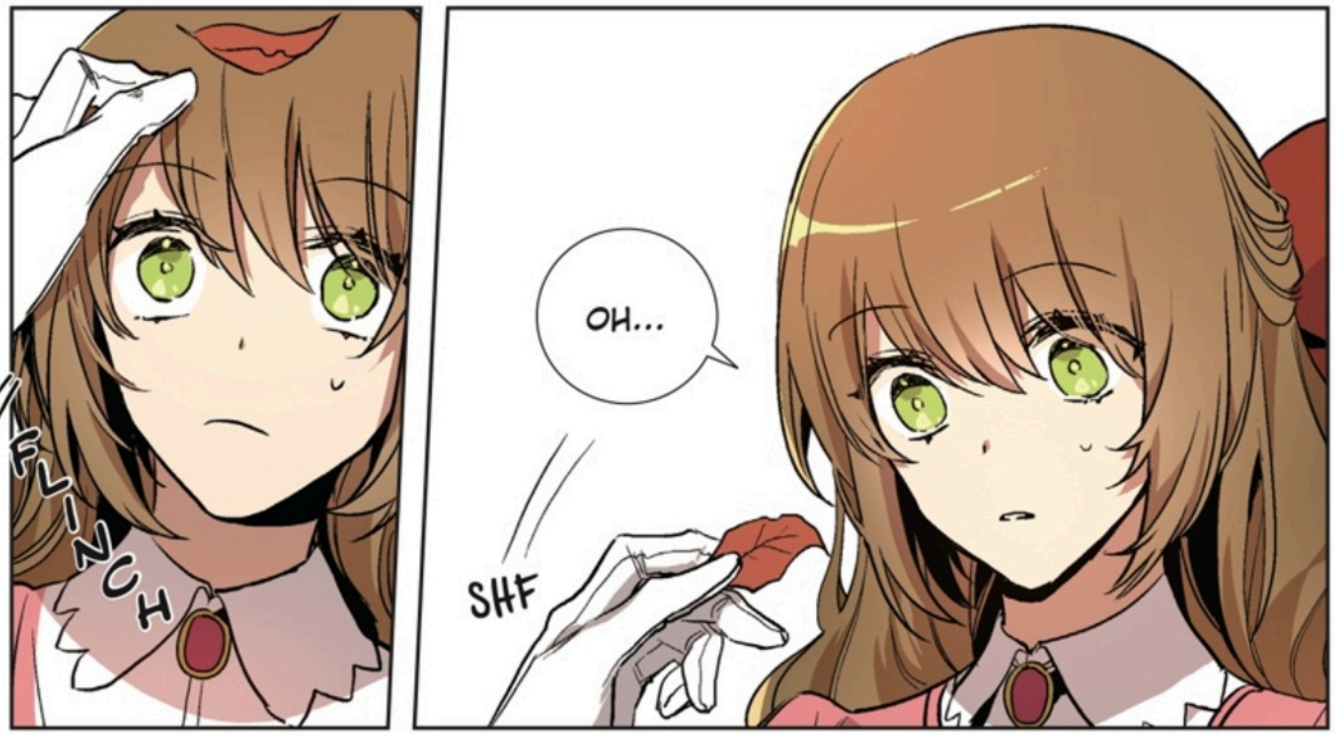
FWUMP

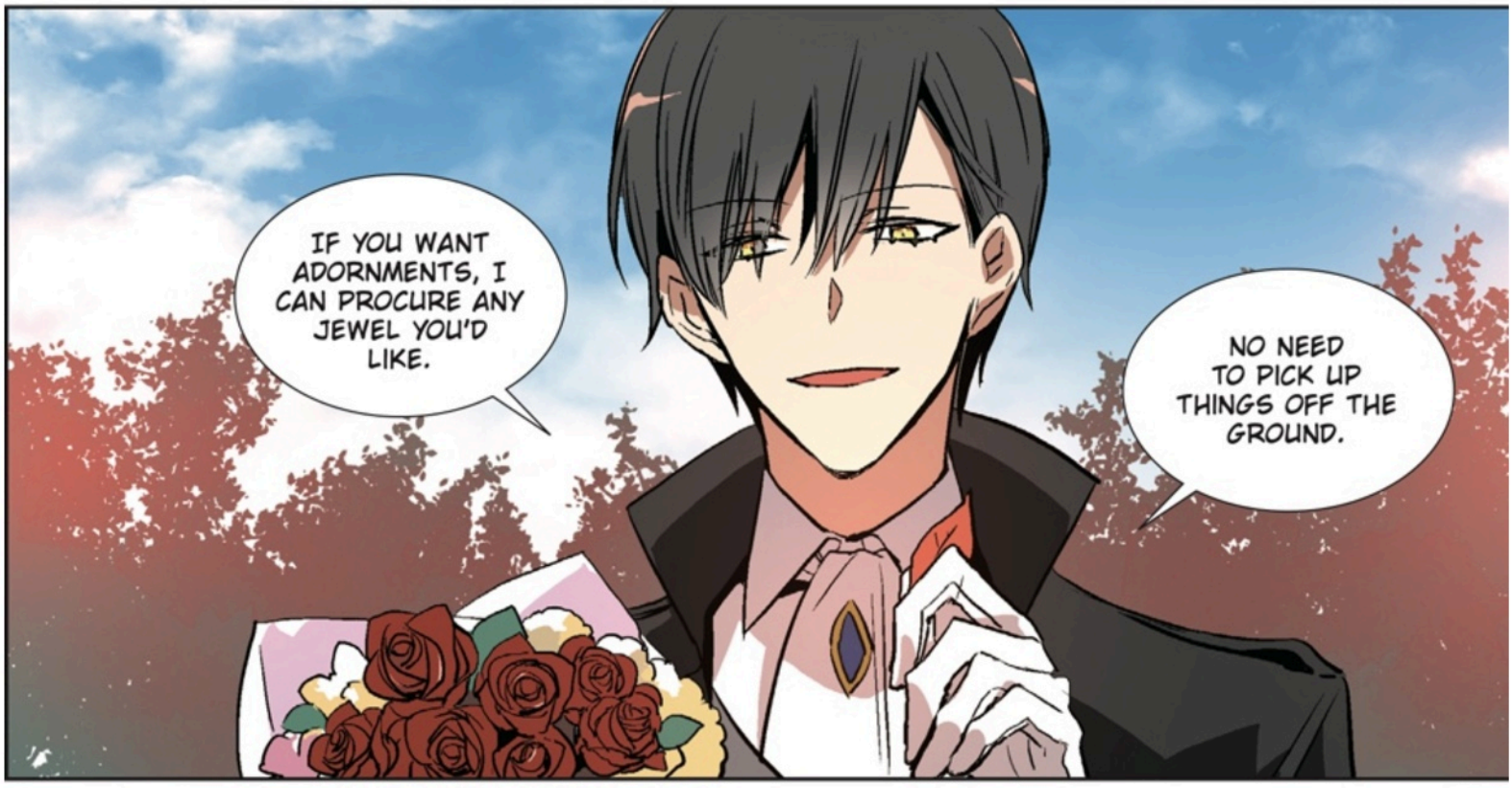
I'VE GOTTEN USED TO SIR TAYLOR, SO IT DOESN'T FEEL AS UNCOMFORTABLE TO BE AROUND HIM.
I'D BEEN WORRIED ABOUT CONSTANTLY RUNNING INTO THE DUKE, BUT HE'S SO BUSY WITH WORK THAT I DON'T SEE HIM AT ALL.
SWAY



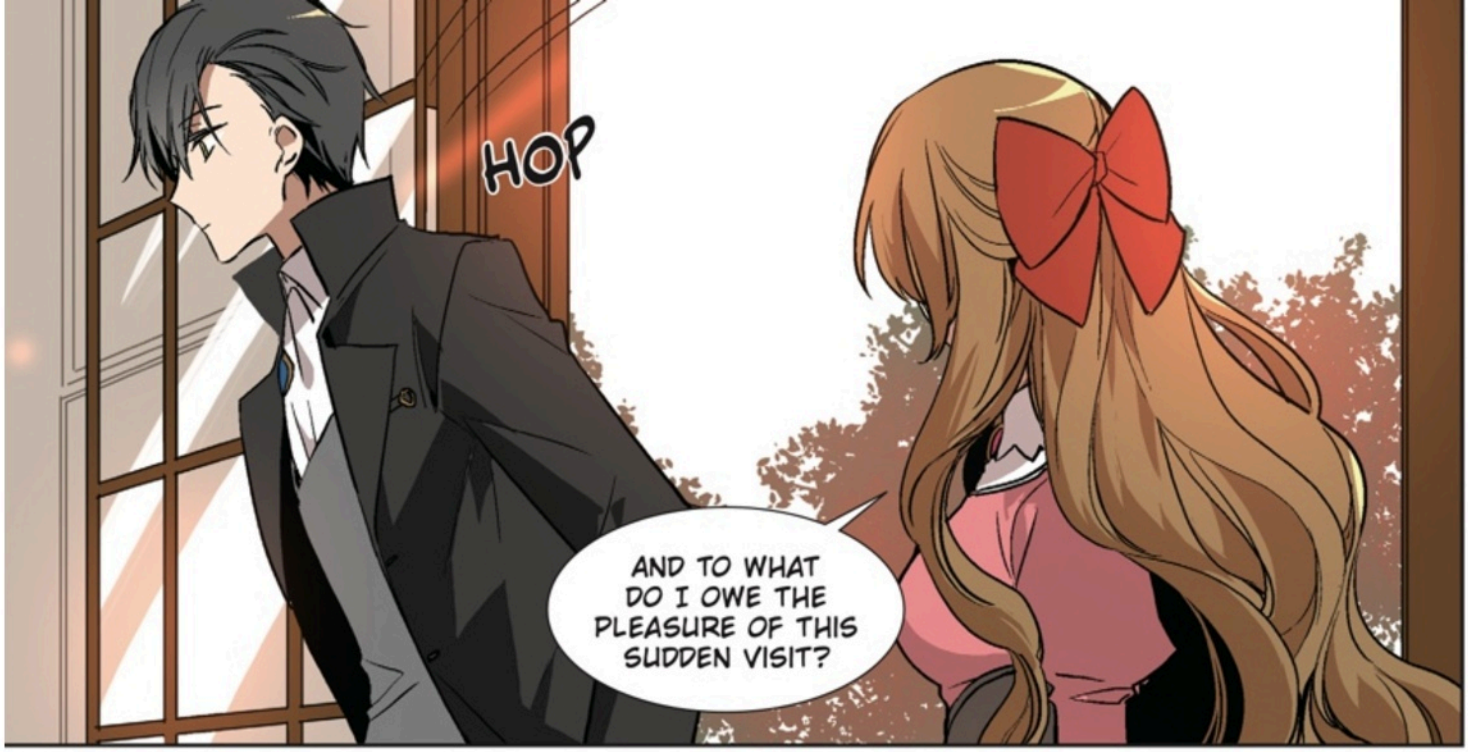
...I FEEL DROWSY.


LOOM
THAT SHADOW...
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?


FLINCH
OH...
SHF


IF YOU WANT ADORNMENTS, I CAN PROCURE ANY JEWEL YOU'D LIKE.
NO NEED TO PICK UP THINGS OFF THE GROUND.

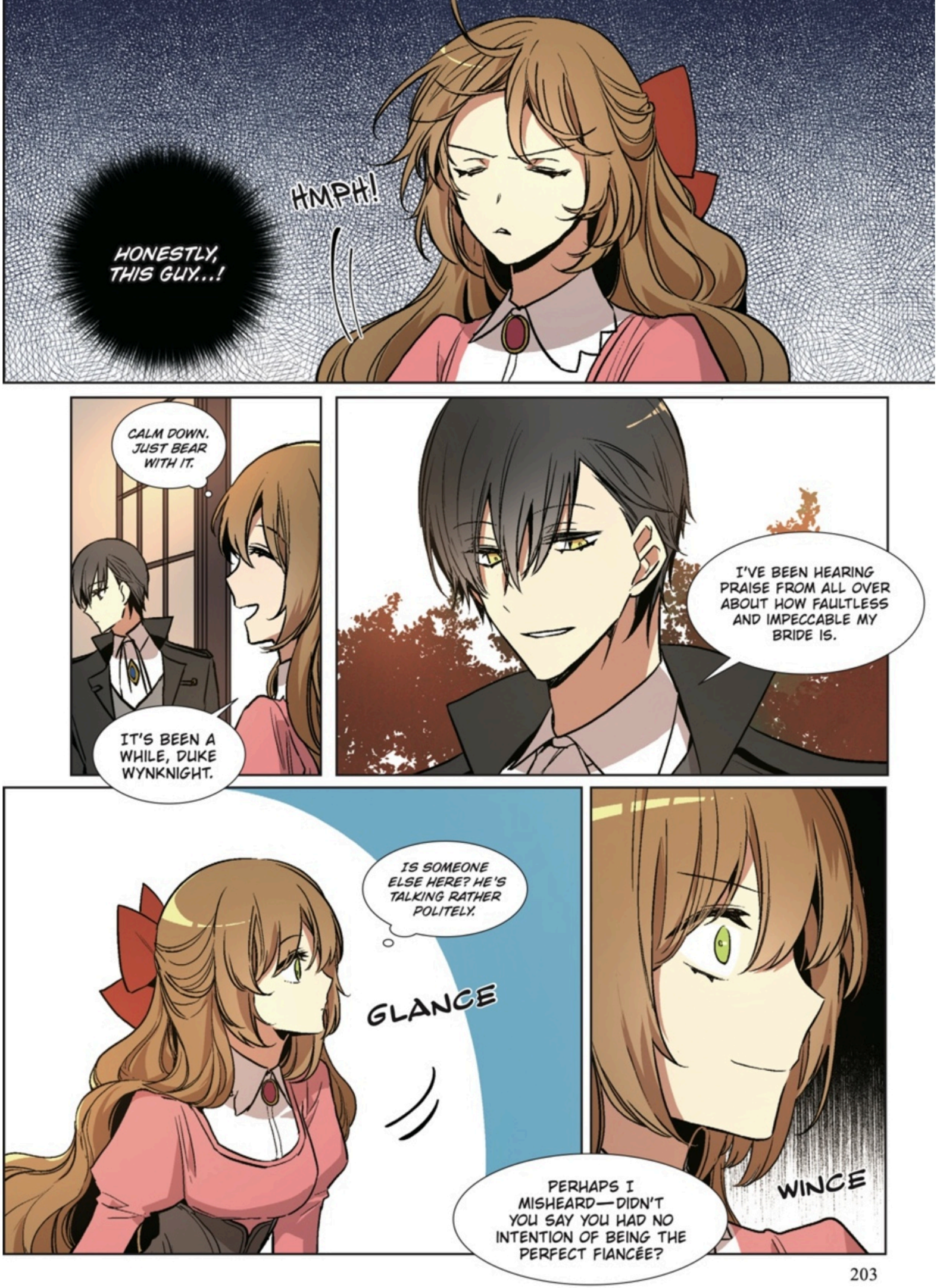
HOW DOES HE MANAGE...
...TO PACK SO MUCH ANNOYANCE INTO SO FEW WORDS?

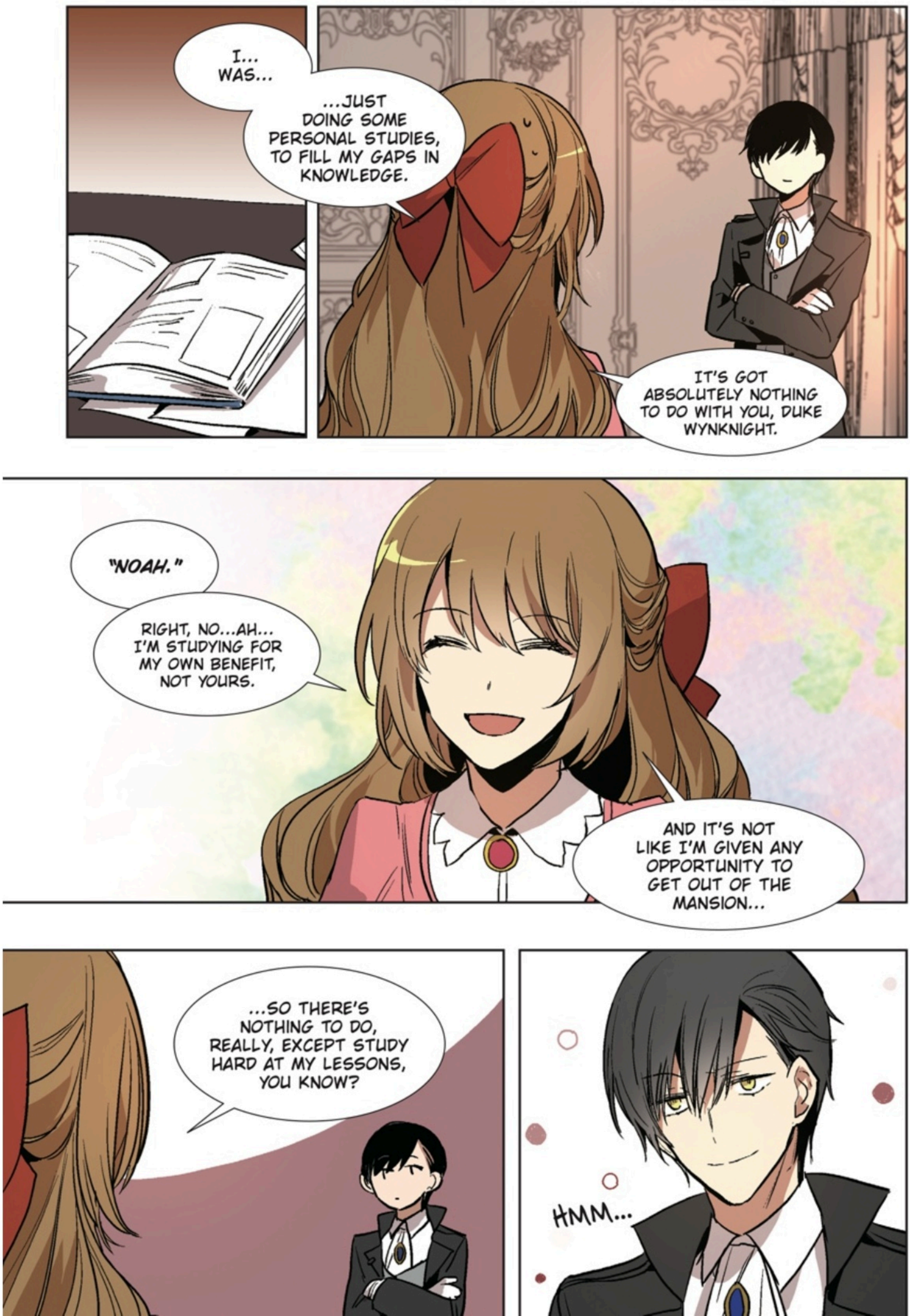

HOP
AND TO WHAT DO I OWE THE PLEASURE OF THIS SUDDEN VISIT?

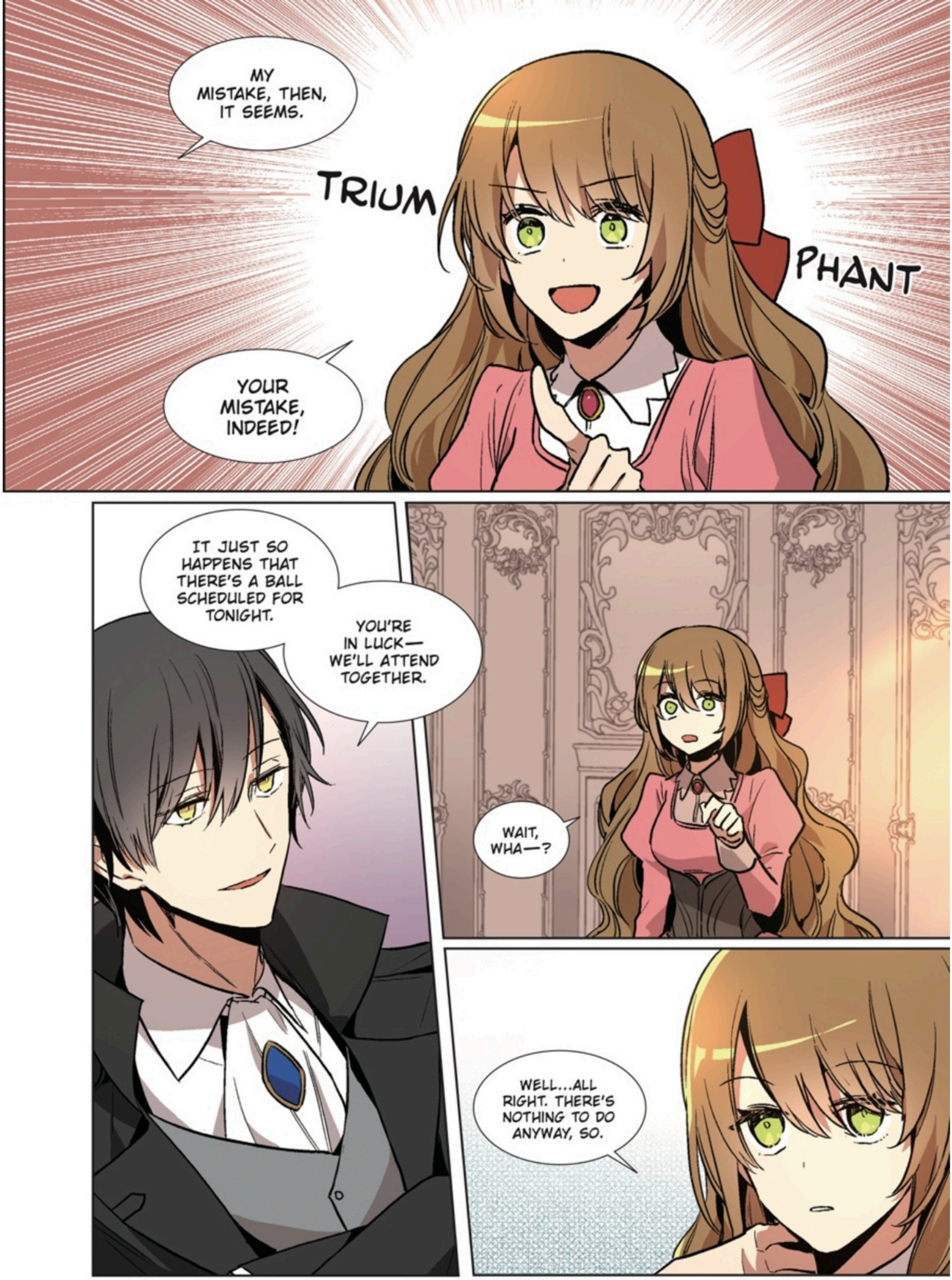
RUSTLE

FLOWERS?
WHY WOULD HE...?

PLOP

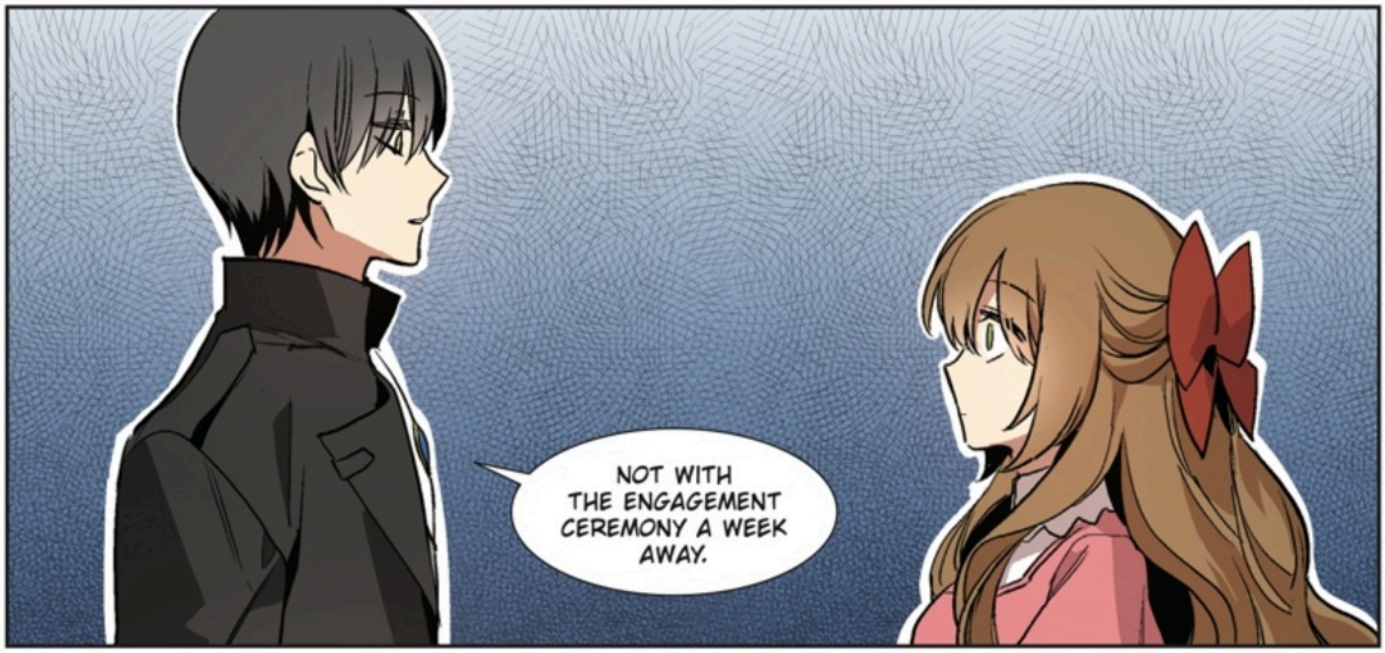

HONESTLY, THIS GUY...!
HMPH!
CALM DOWN. JUST BEAR WITH IT.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, DUKE WYNKNIGHT.
I'VE BEEN HEARING PRAISE FROM ALL OVER ABOUT HOW FAULTLESS AND IMPECCABLE MY BRIDE IS.
IS SOMEONE ELSE HERE? HE'S TALKING RATHER POLITELY.
GLANCE
PERHAPS I MISHEARD—DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU HAD NO INTENTION OF BEING THE PERFECT FIANCÉE?
WINCE

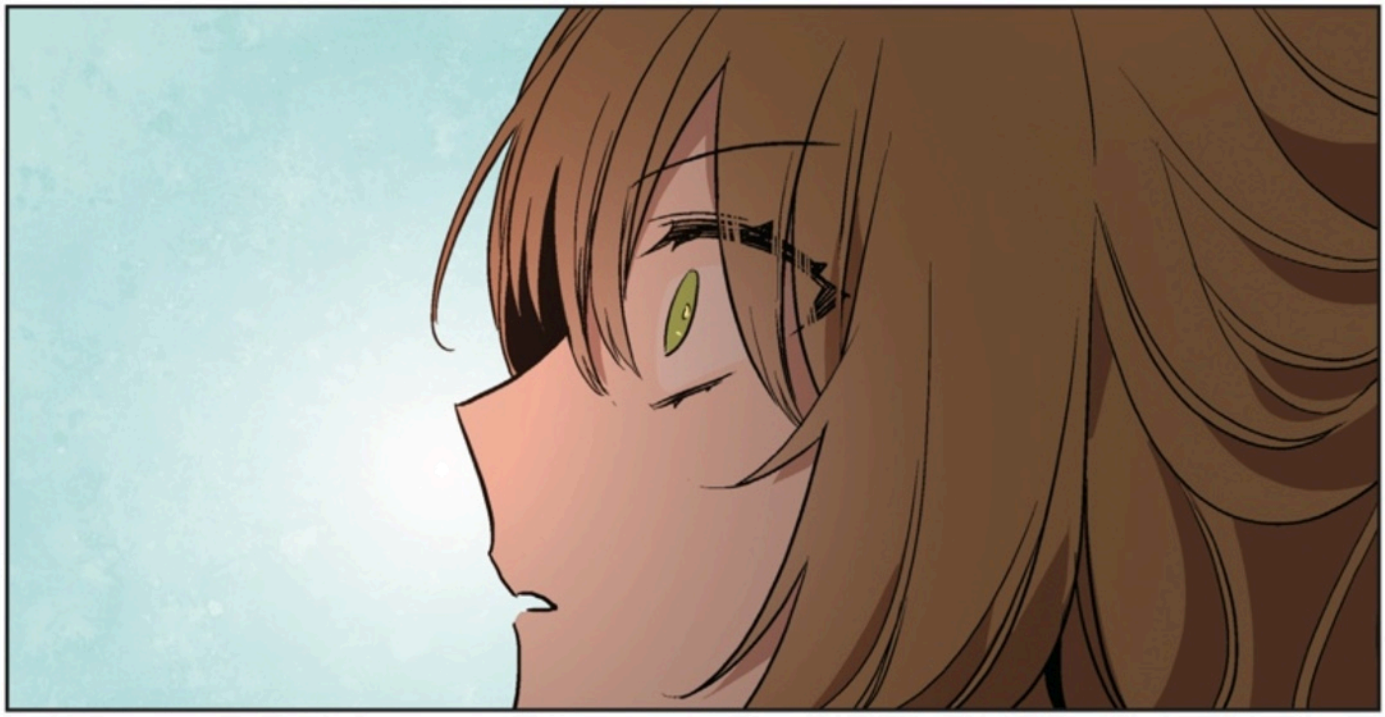

I... WAS...
...JUST DOING SOME PERSONAL STUDIES, TO FILL MY GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE.
IT'S GOT ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, DUKE WYNKNIGHT.
"NOAH."
RIGHT, NO...AH... I'M STUDYING FOR MY OWN BENEFIT, NOT YOURS.
AND IT'S NOT LIKE I'M GIVEN ANY OPPORTUNITY TO GET OUT OF THE MANSION...
...SO THERE'S NOTHING TO DO, REALLY, EXCEPT STUDY HARD AT MY LESSONS, YOU KNOW?
HMM...


MY MISTAKE, THEN, IT SEEMS.
TRIUM
PHANT
YOUR MISTAKE, INDEED!
IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT THERE'S A BALL SCHEDULED FOR TONIGHT.
YOU'RE IN LUCK— WE'LL ATTEND TOGETHER.
WAIT, WHA—?
WELL...ALL RIGHT. THERE'S NOTHING TO DO ANYWAY, SO.

AND WE'LL ALSO ANNOUNCE OUR BETROTHAL THERE.

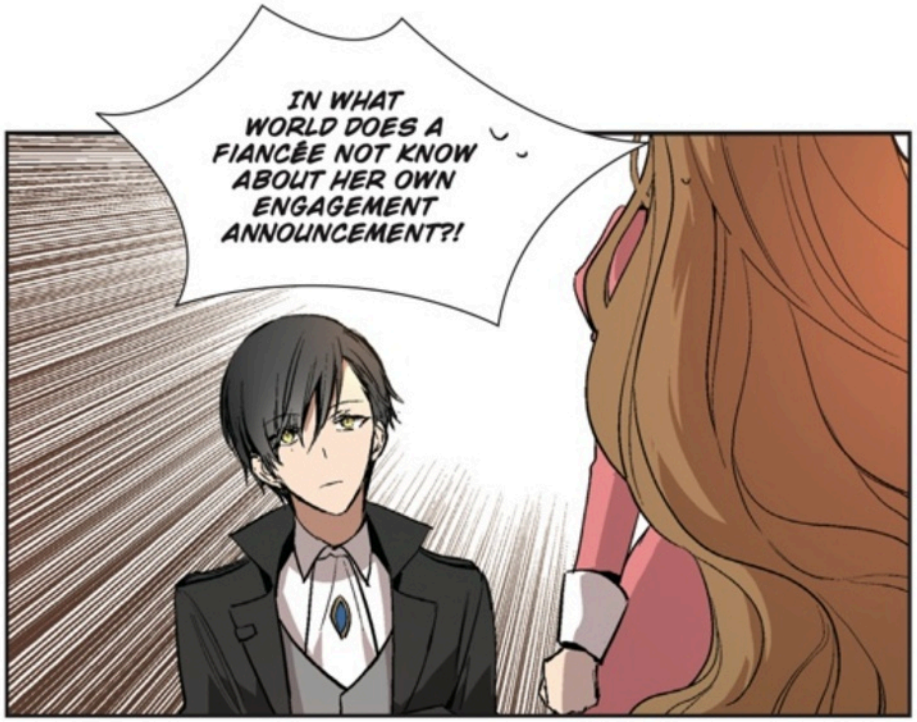
HUUUH ?!
ALL OF A SUDDEN...ON YOUR OWN WHIM...?!
TAP
IT CAN'T BE POSTPONED ANY FURTHER.


NOT WITH THE ENGAGEMENT CEREMONY A WEEK AWAY.

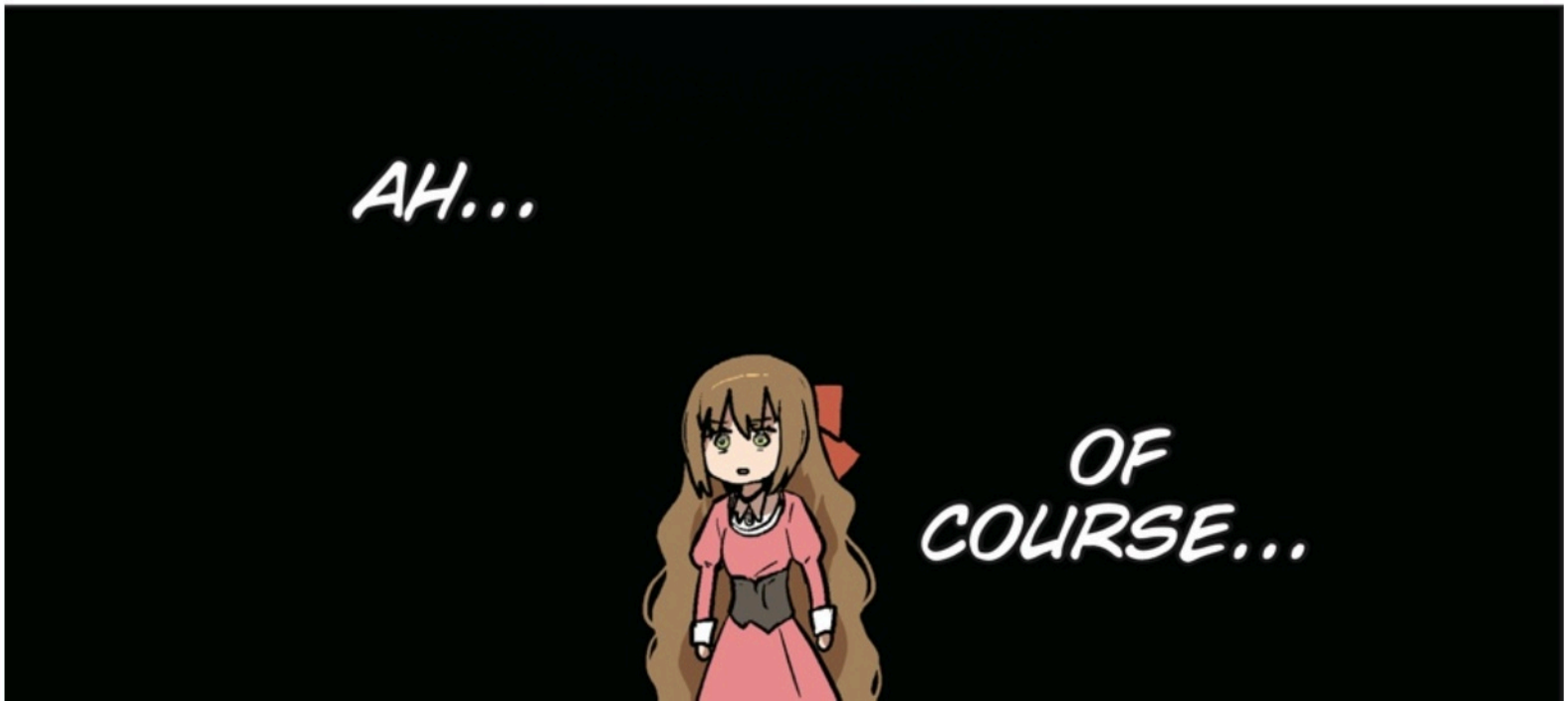


WITH THE WHAT WHEN?

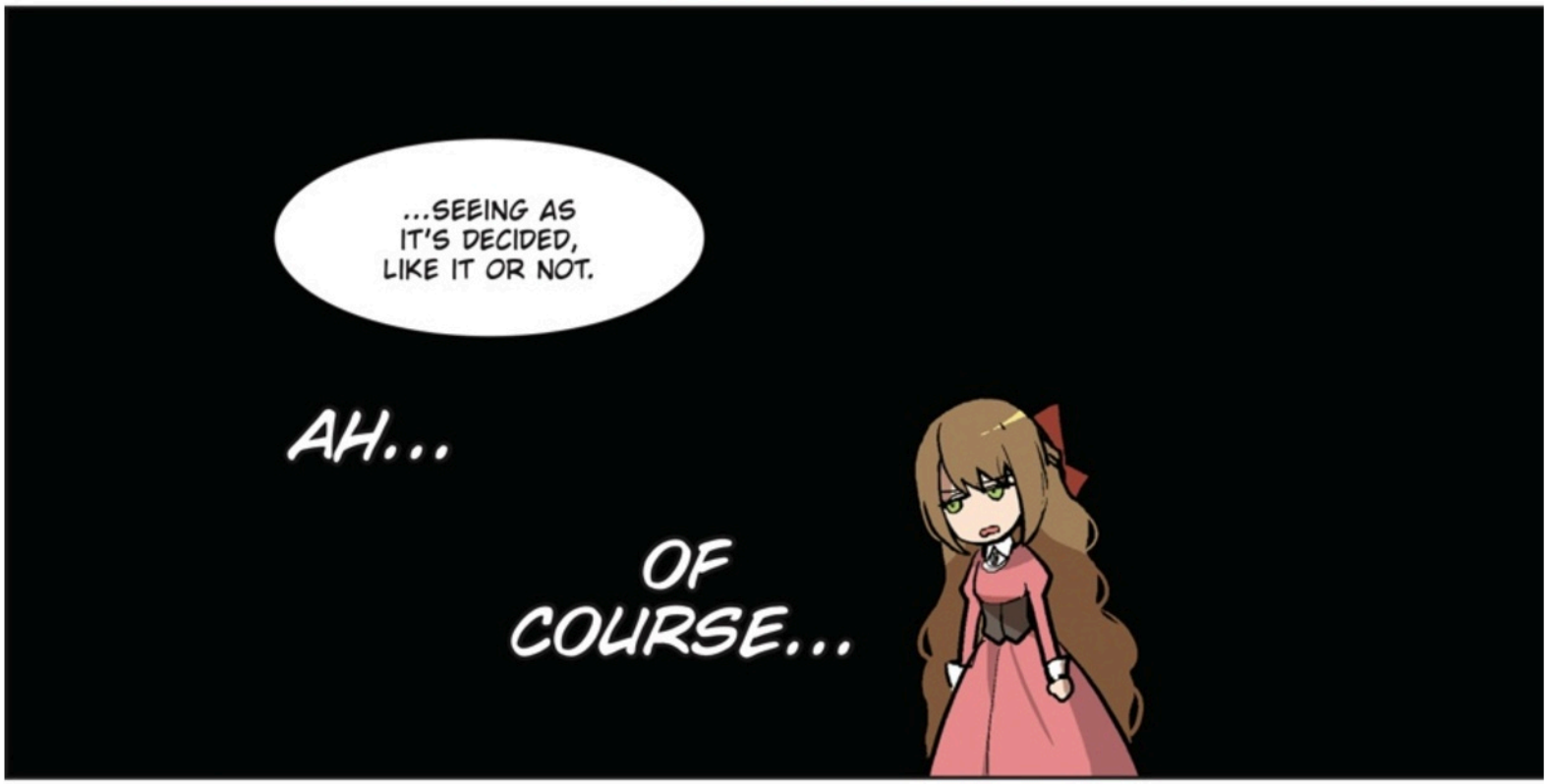
HOLY...


IN WHAT WORLD DOES A FIANCÉE NOT KNOW ABOUT HER OWN ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT?!

IN THIS ONE.


AH...
OF COURSE...

ARE YOU UPSET?
TILT
...NO.
SMILE
OH, THAT'S A RELIEF...

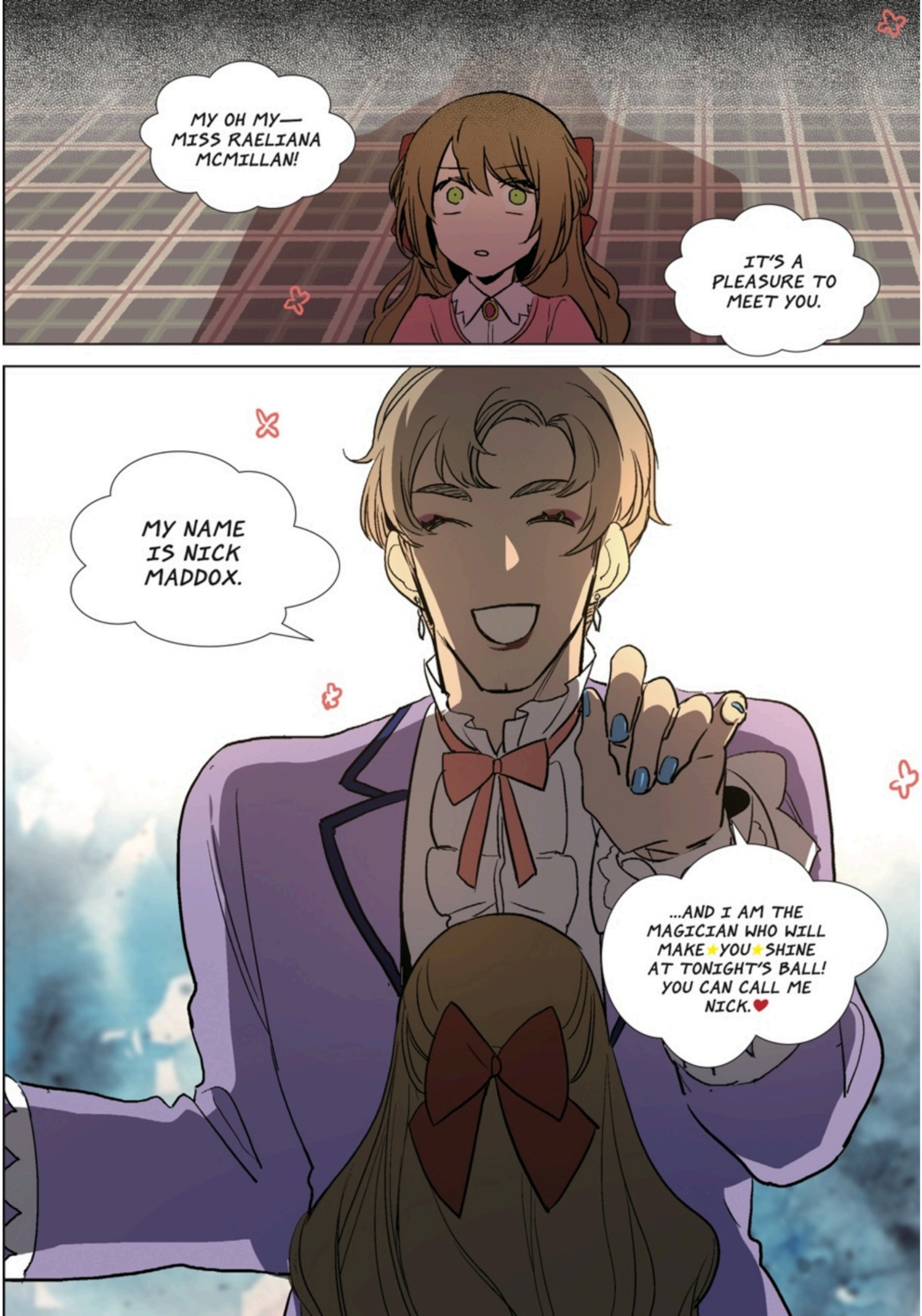

...SEEING AS IT'S DECIDED, LIKE IT OR NOT.
AH...
OF COURSE...

I HAVE TO START GETTING READY NOW—

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
SOMEONE HAS ALREADY BEEN SUMMONED.

YOU MAY ENTER.

KER-CHAK

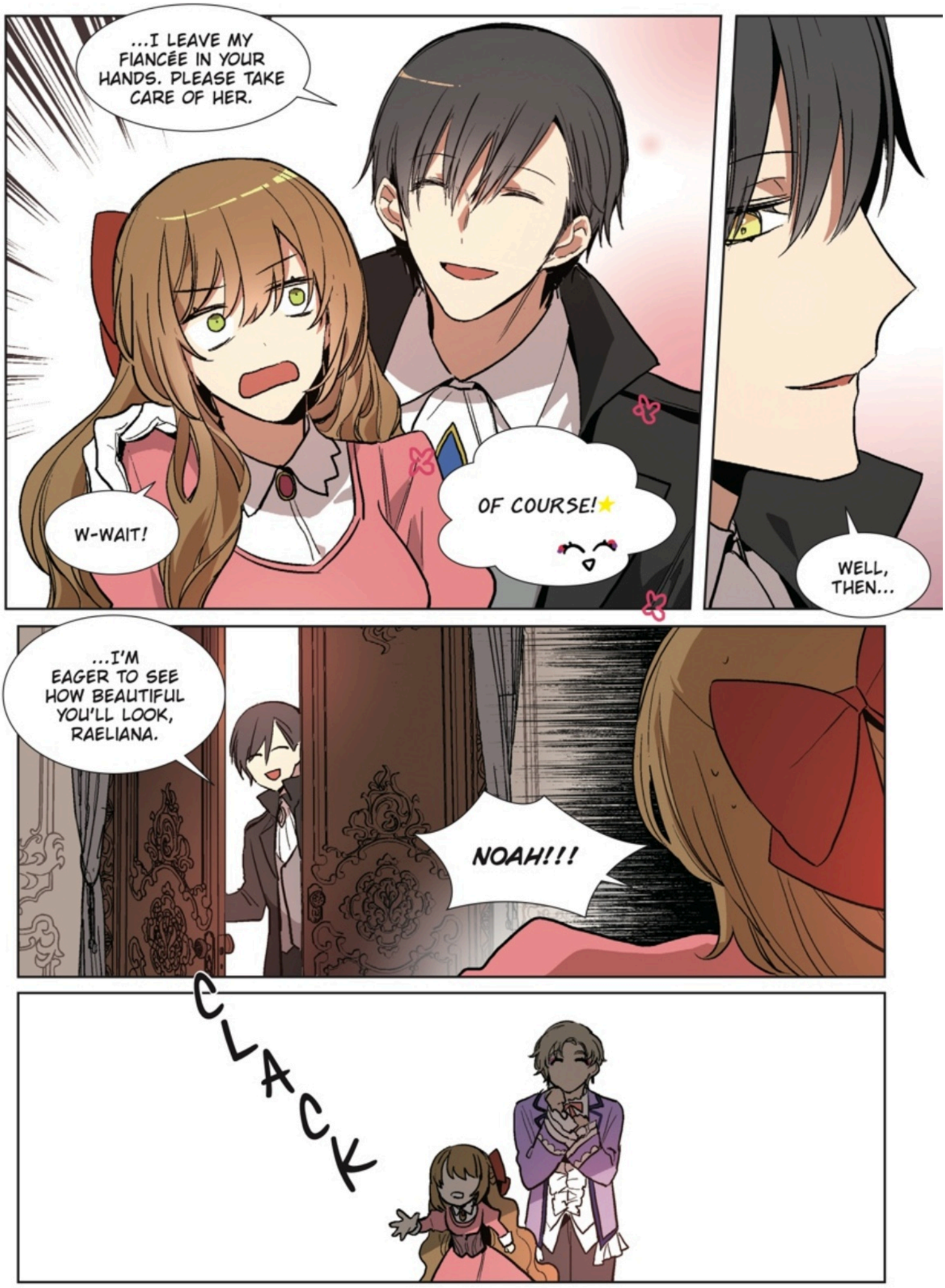

MY OH MY— MISS RAELIANA MCMILLAN!
IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.
MY NAME IS NICK MADDOX.
...AND I AM THE MAGICIAN WHO WILL MAKE YOU SHINE AT TONIGHT'S BALL! YOU CAN CALL ME NICK.

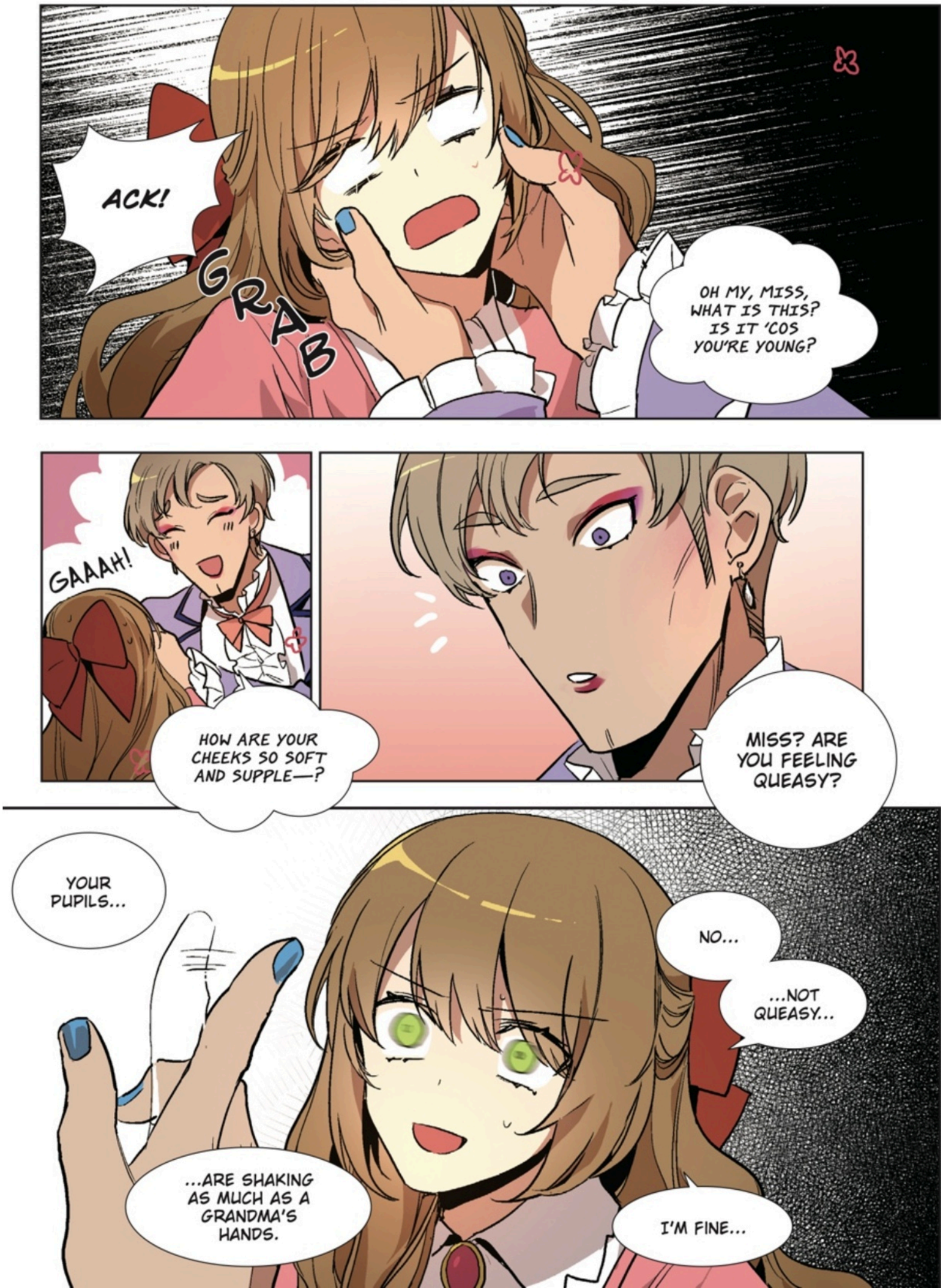
IS THIS A PRANK?

WELL, I SHOULD BE GETTING READY MYSELF NOW.
HEY!

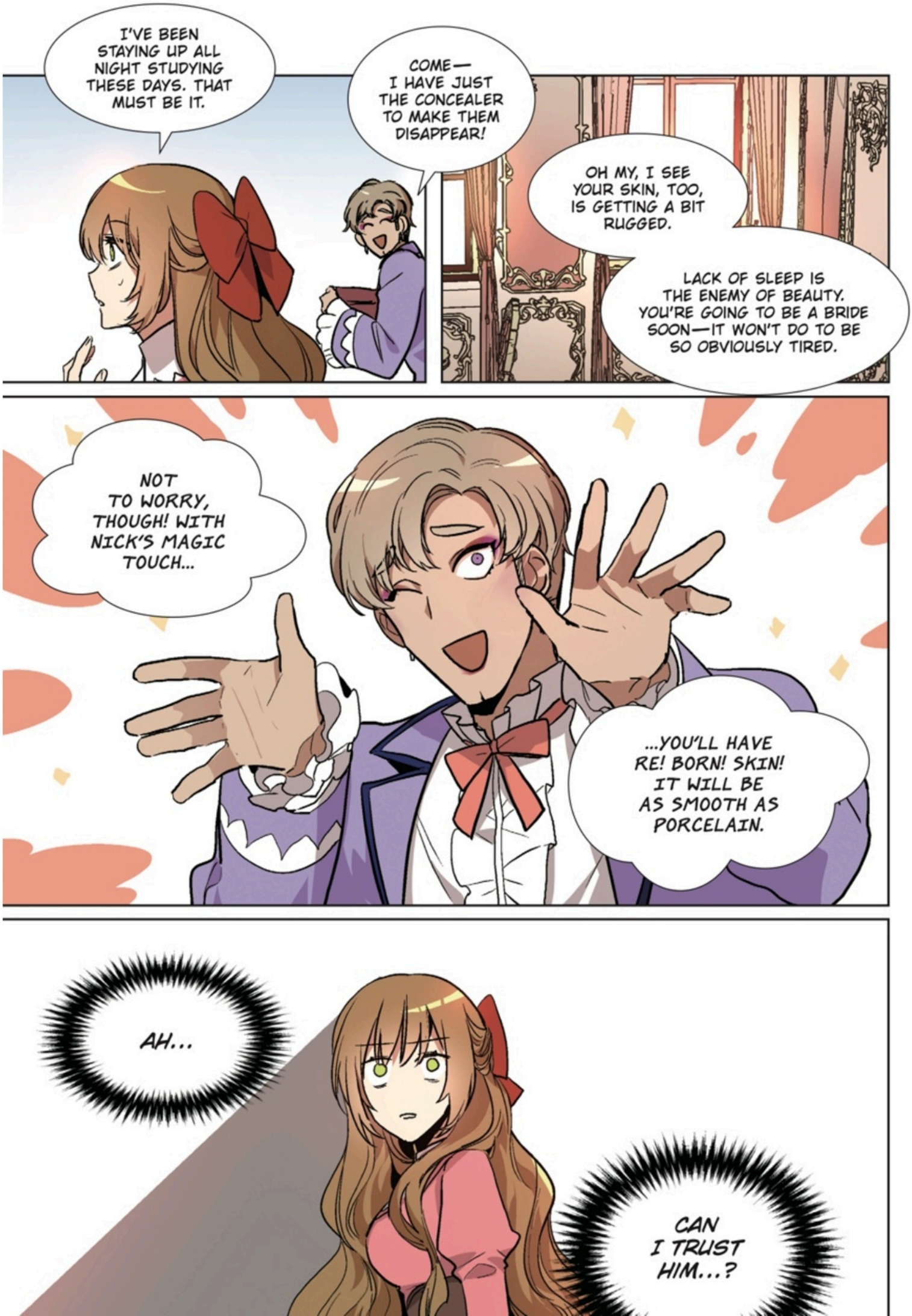
SLIDE

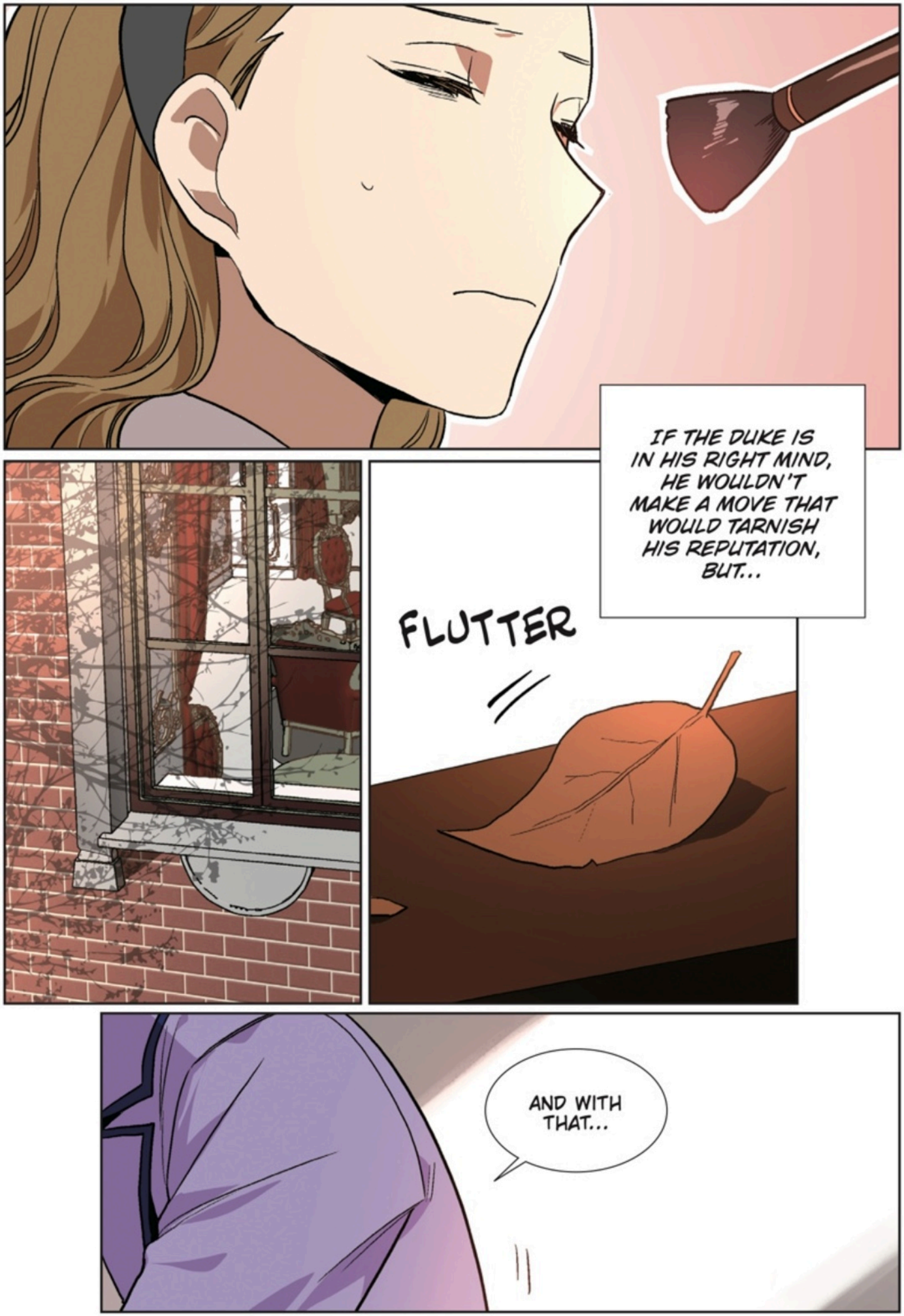
NICK...

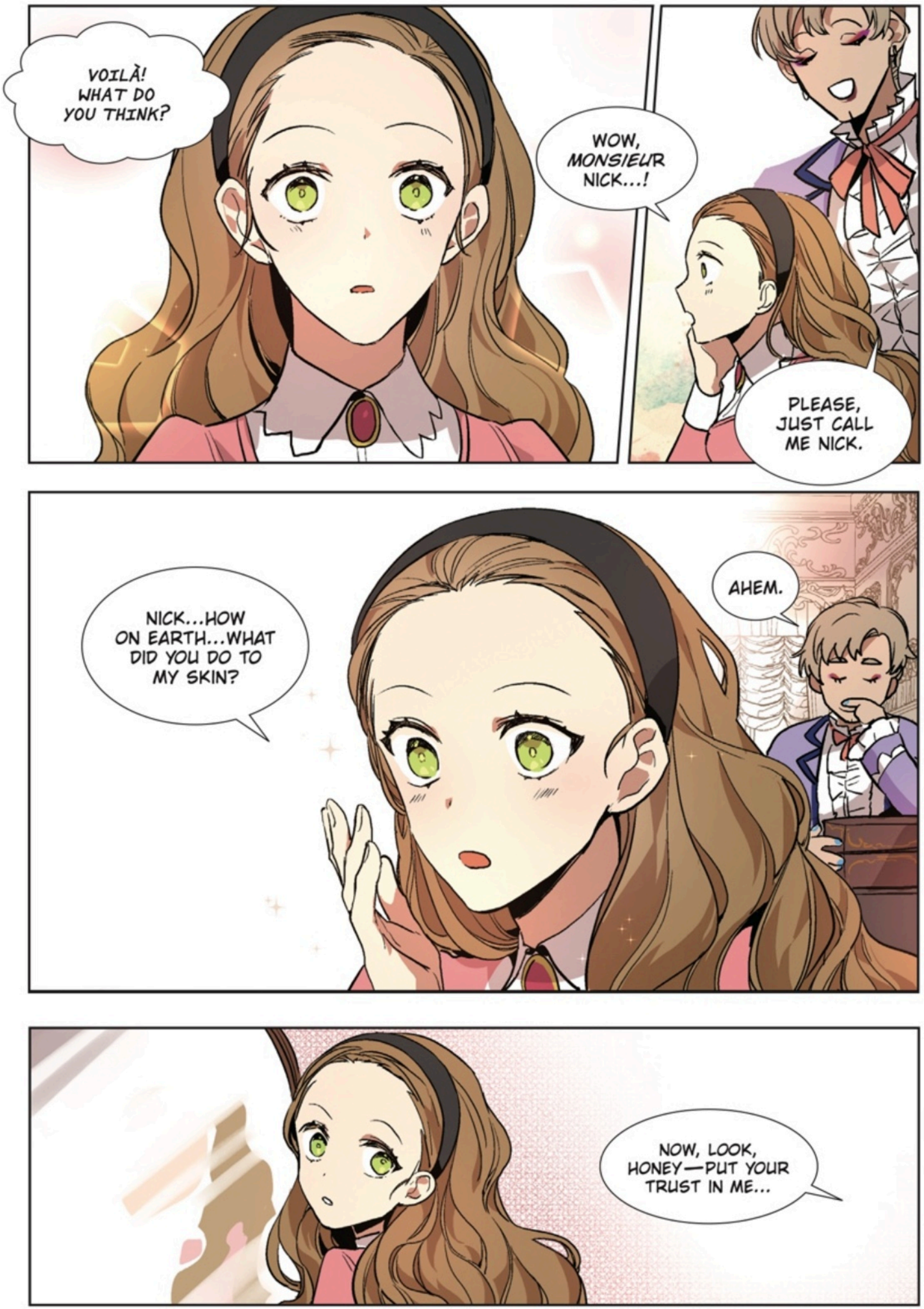

...I LEAVE MY FIANCÉE IN YOUR HANDS. PLEASE TAKE CARE OF HER.
W-WAIT!
OF COURSE!
WELL, THEN...
...I'M EAGER TO SEE HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU'LL LOOK, RAELIANA.
NOAH!!!
CLACK


ACK!
GRAB
OH MY, MISS, WHAT IS THIS? IS IT 'COS YOU'RE YOUNG?
GAAAH!
HOW ARE YOUR CHEEKS SO SOFT AND SUPPLE—?
MISS? ARE YOU FEELING QUEASY?
YOUR PUPILS...
NO...
...NOT QUEASY...
...ARE SHAKING AS MUCH AS A GRANDMA'S HANDS.
I'M FINE...

SO, NICK, WHAT SHOULD I CALL YOU? THE BEAU MONDE'S...MADAME? MISTER?
AH, MONSIEUR. IT'S MONSIEUR NICK.
I SEE.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME A MOMENT—
OH MY, OH MY, OH MY! HONEY! WHAT IS THIS?
HONEY? DID YOU JUST CALL ME HONEY?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE DETAILS.
JUST LOOK HERE, HONEY. WHAT ARE THESE DARK CIRCLES DOING BENEATH YOUR EYES?
OH...


I'VE BEEN STAYING UP ALL NIGHT STUDYING THESE DAYS. THAT MUST BE IT.
COME— I HAVE JUST THE CONCEALER TO MAKE THEM DISAPPEAR!
OH MY, I SEE YOUR SKIN, TOO, IS GETTING A BIT RUGGED.
LACK OF SLEEP IS THE ENEMY OF BEAUTY. YOU'RE GOING TO BE A BRIDE SOON—IT WON'T DO TO BE SO OBVIOUSLY TIRED.
NOT TO WORRY, THOUGH! WITH NICK'S MAGIC TOUCH...
...YOU'LL HAVE RE! BORN! SKIN! IT WILL BE AS SMOOTH AS PORCELAIN.
AH...
CAN I TRUST HIM...?


IF THE DUKE IS IN HIS RIGHT MIND, HE WOULDN'T MAKE A MOVE THAT WOULD TARNISH HIS REPUTATION, BUT...
FLUTTER
AND WITH THAT...


VOILÀ! WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WOW, MONSIEUR NICK...!
PLEASE, JUST CALL ME NICK.
NICK...HOW ON EARTH...WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY SKIN?
AHEM.
NOW, LOOK, HONEY—PUT YOUR TRUST IN ME...

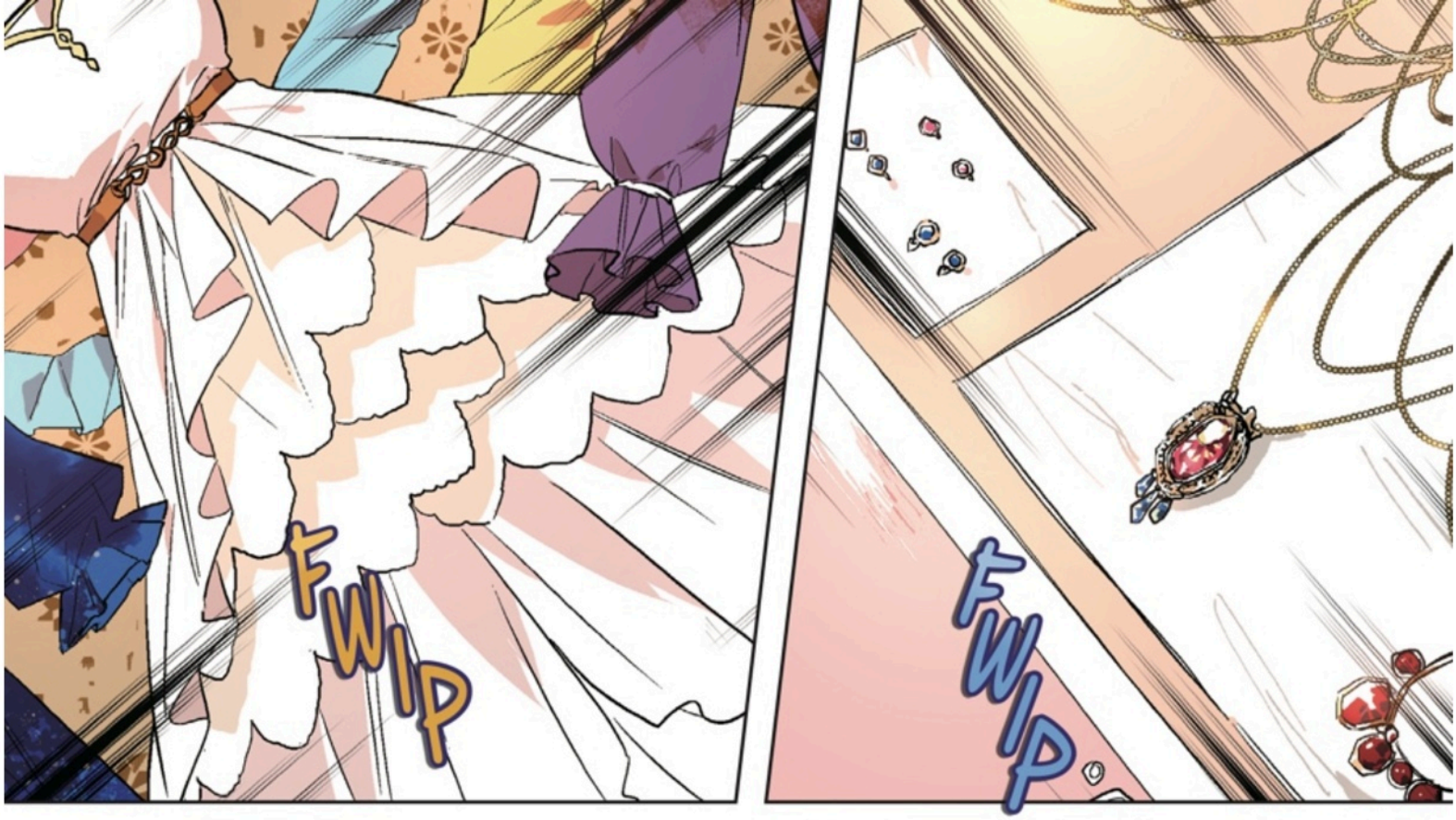
...AND I SHALL MAKE YOU THE ABSOLUTE BELLE OF TONIGHT'S BALL.

AS ALWAYS...

OH, NICK!

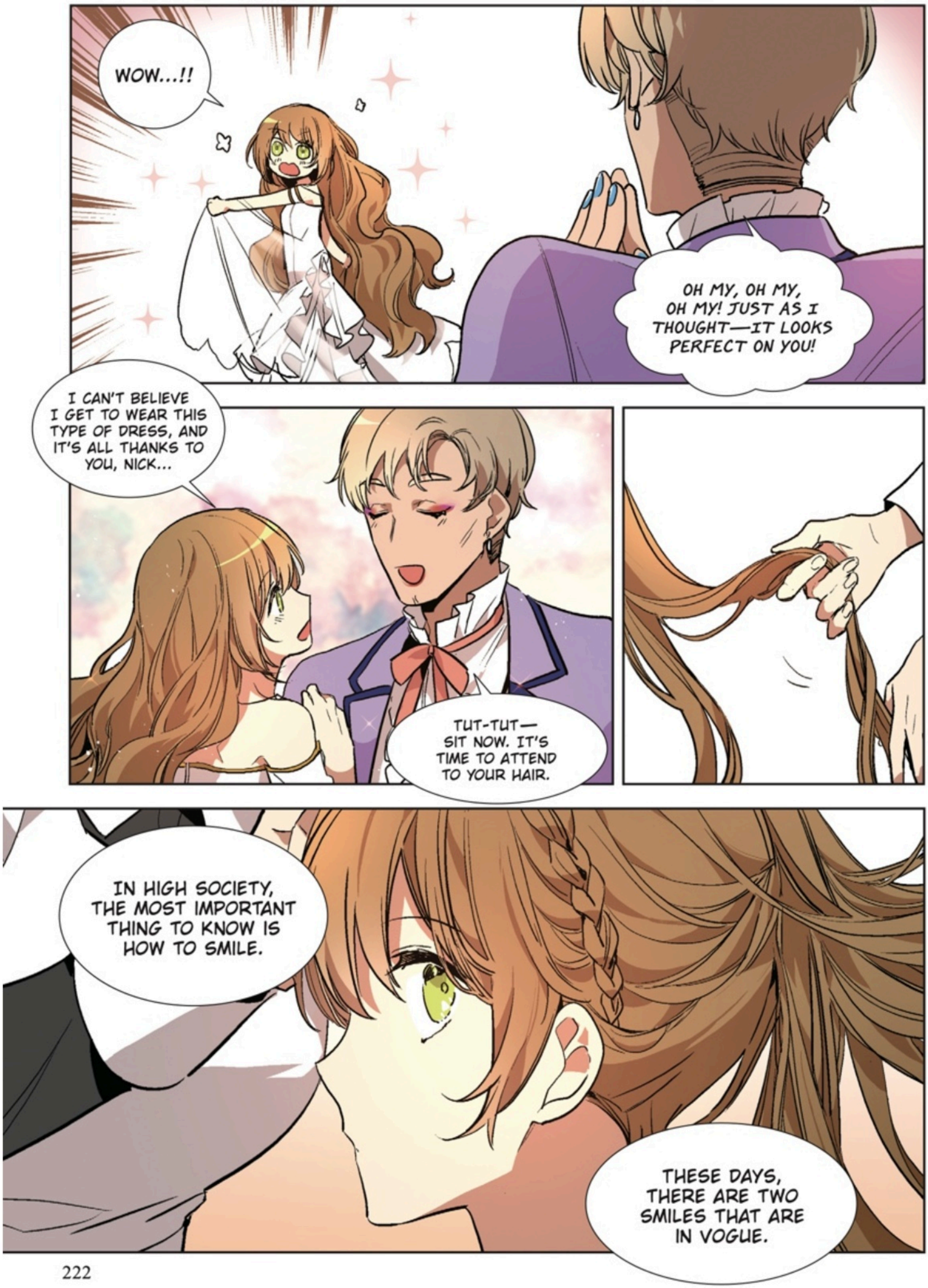
HONEY!

...YOU SHOULDN'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER.


FWIP
FWIP

SWISH..

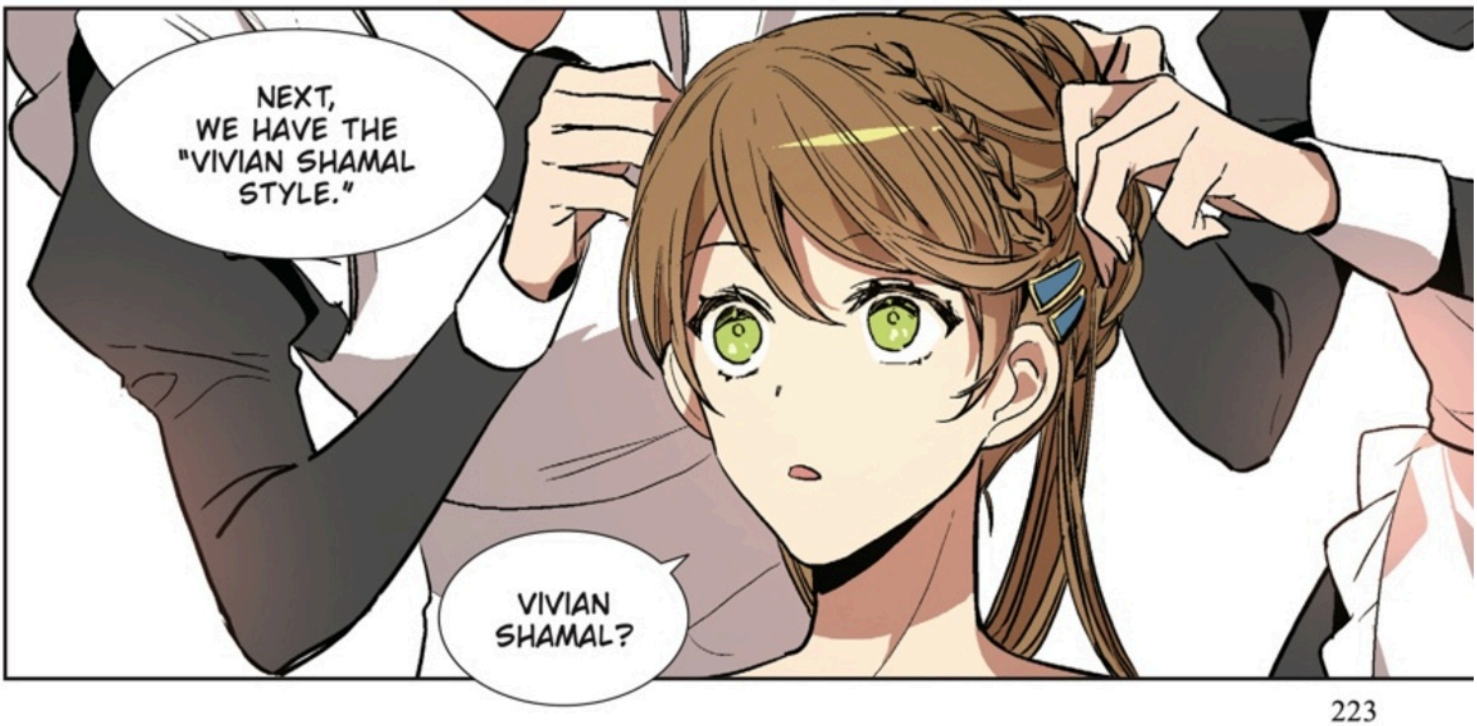
WOW...

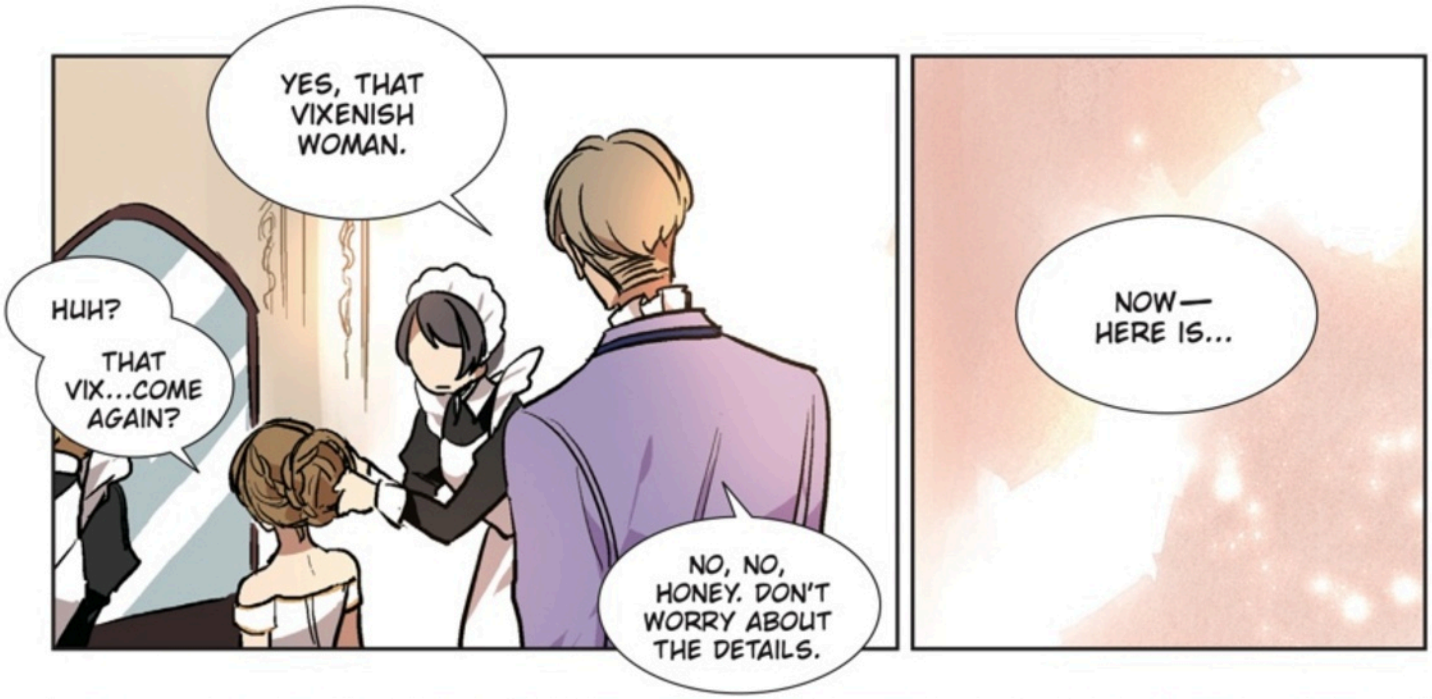

WOW...!!
OH MY, OH MY, OH MY! JUST AS I THOUGHT—IT LOOKS PERFECT ON YOU!
I CAN'T BELIEVE I GET TO WEAR THIS TYPE OF DRESS, AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, NICK...
TUT-TUT— SIT NOW. IT'S TIME TO ATTEND TO YOUR HAIR.
IN HIGH SOCIETY, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO KNOW IS HOW TO SMILE.
THESE DAYS, THERE ARE TWO SMILES THAT ARE IN VOGUE.

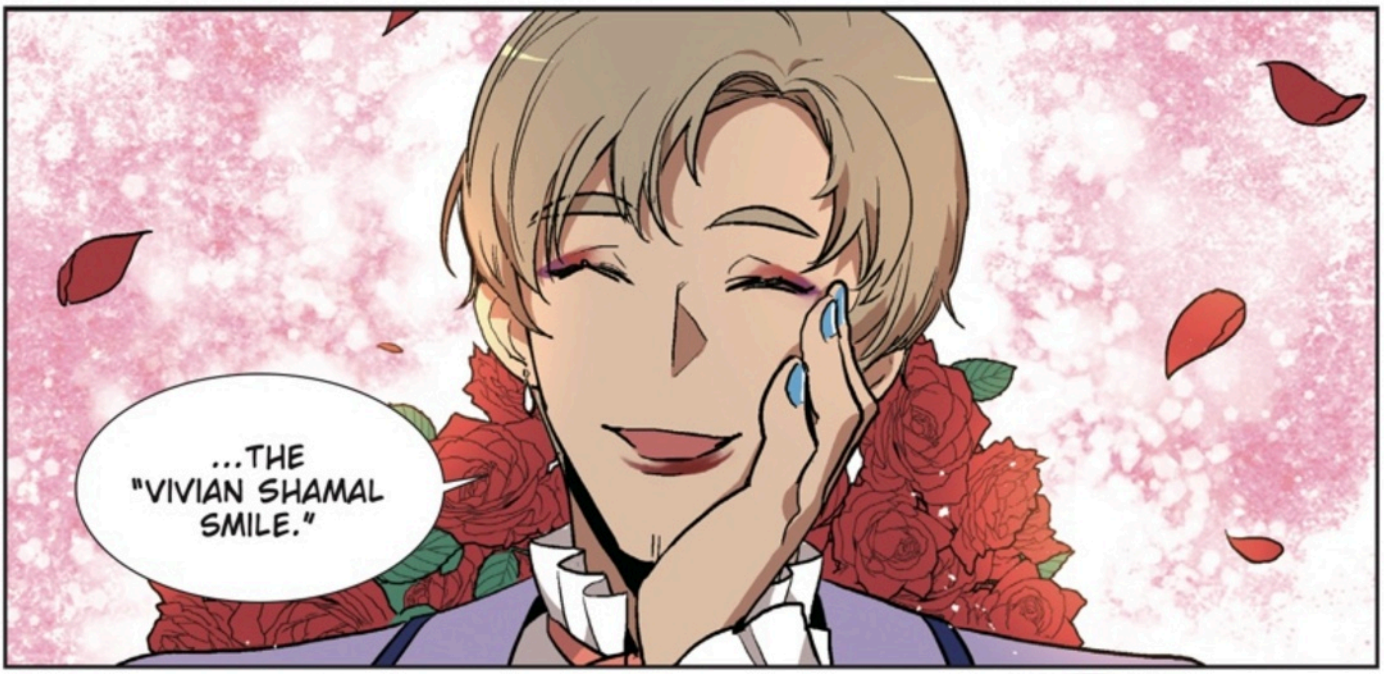
BEAM
THE FIRST IS KNOWN AS THE "NOAH WYNKNIGHT STYLE."

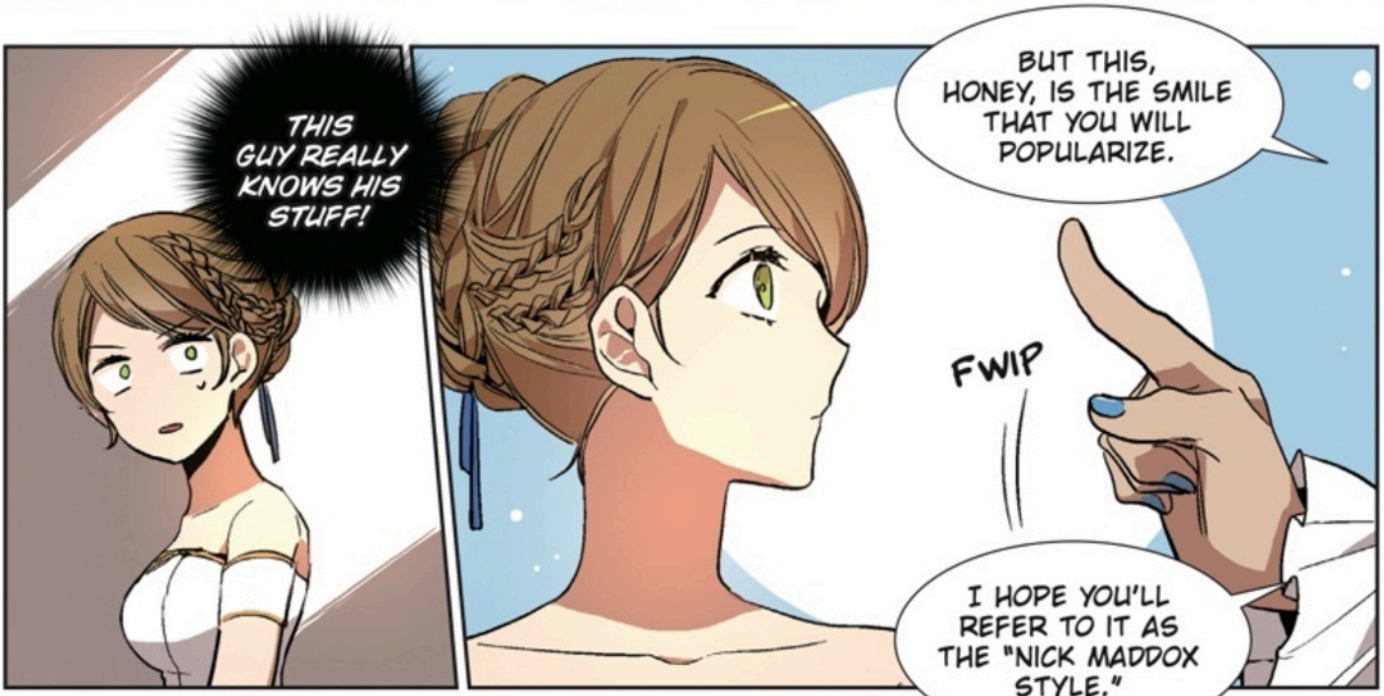
THE NEUTRAL SMILE HE GIVES EVERYONE...
...THAT REALLY SAYS, "I'M NOT SURE IF IT'S WORDS OR SHIT THAT'S COMING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH RIGHT NOW."
SEEING AS ONLY NOAH WYNKNIGHT CAN PULL IT OFF, YOU WON'T BE TRYING THIS ONE.
NICK...!!

I THOUGHT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW THE REAL MEANING.
OH-HO...NO SMILE'S SECRETS ARE SAFE FROM MONSIEUR★NICK. FINDING THEM OUT IS EASY!


NEXT, WE HAVE THE "VIVIAN SHAMAL STYLE."
VIVIAN SHAMAL?


YES, THAT VIXENISH WOMAN.
HUH?
THAT VIX...COME AGAIN?
NO, NO, HONEY. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE DETAILS.
NOW— HERE IS...


...THE "VIVIAN SHAMAL SMILE."


THIS GUY REALLY KNOWS HIS STUFF!
BUT THIS, HONEY, IS THE SMILE THAT YOU WILL POPULARIZE.
FWIP
I HOPE YOU'LL REFER TO IT AS THE "NICK MADDOX STYLE."

OBSERVE CAREFULLY AND FOLLOW ALONG.
FRESH

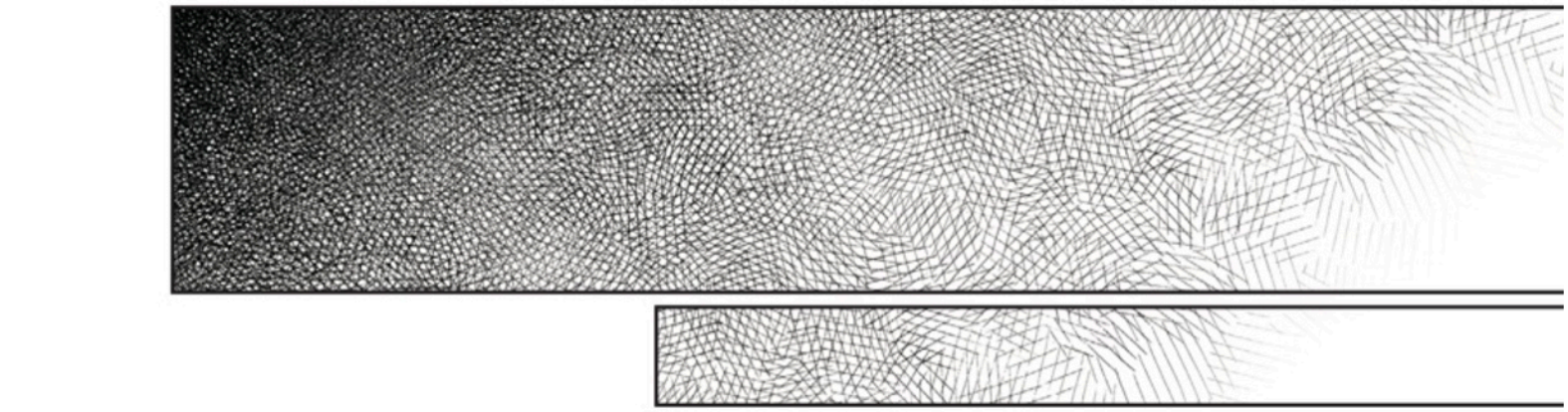
THIS IS HIGH-LEVEL STUFF!

NO, NO! DON'T WRIGGLE THE CORNERS OF YOUR LIPS LIKE THAT! YOUR EYES SHOULDN'T BE TWITCHING!
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU HAVE A MAGNESIUM DEFICIENCY!
MAGNESIUM?

THINK ABOUT THE MOST ODIOUS PERSON YOU KNOW.
THEIR HEAD OR CHEST— WHICH WOULD YOU SHOOT IF YOU SAW THEM?
IF I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SHOOT THEM?
THEN THE HEAD, OF COURSE.

PRECISELY— NOW CHANNEL THE FEELING OF FIRING THAT HEADSHOT!

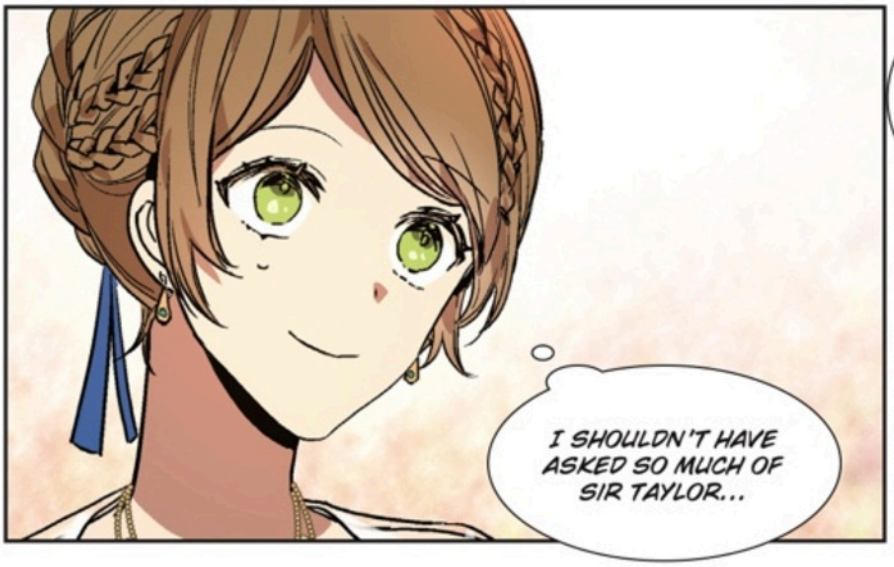
THAT'S IT! WONDERFUL!



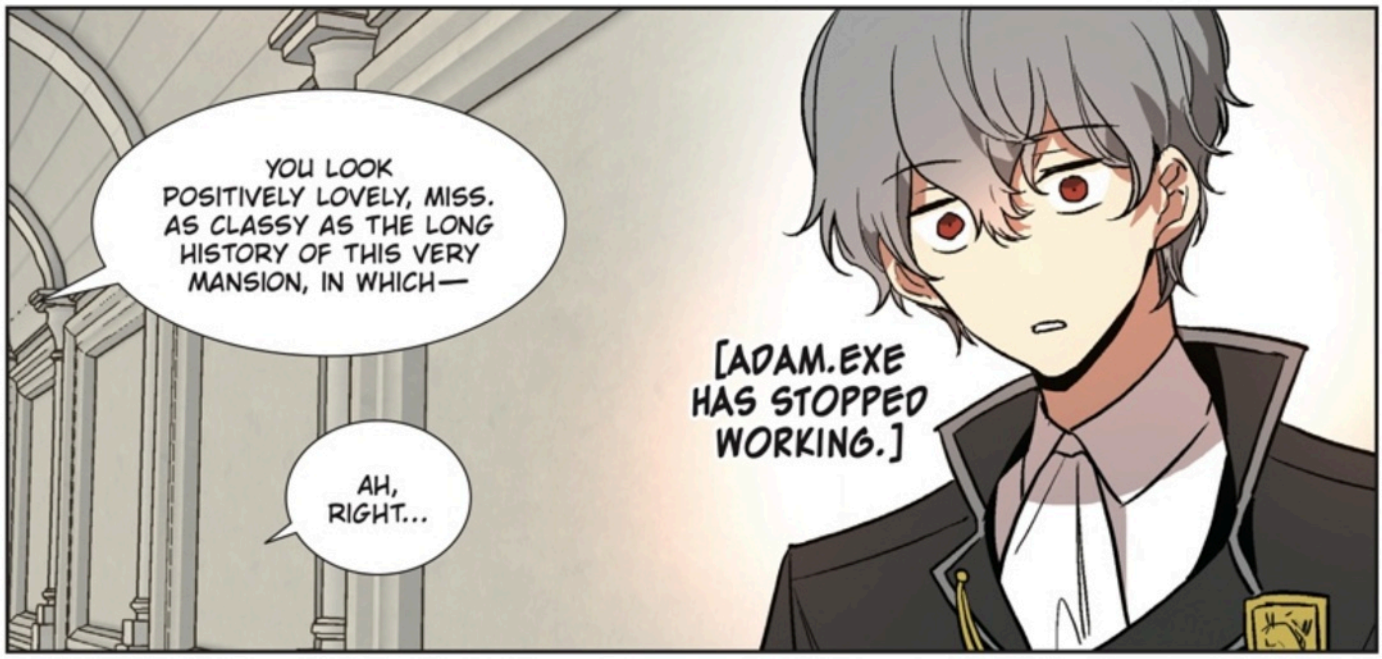
CLACK
FREEZE

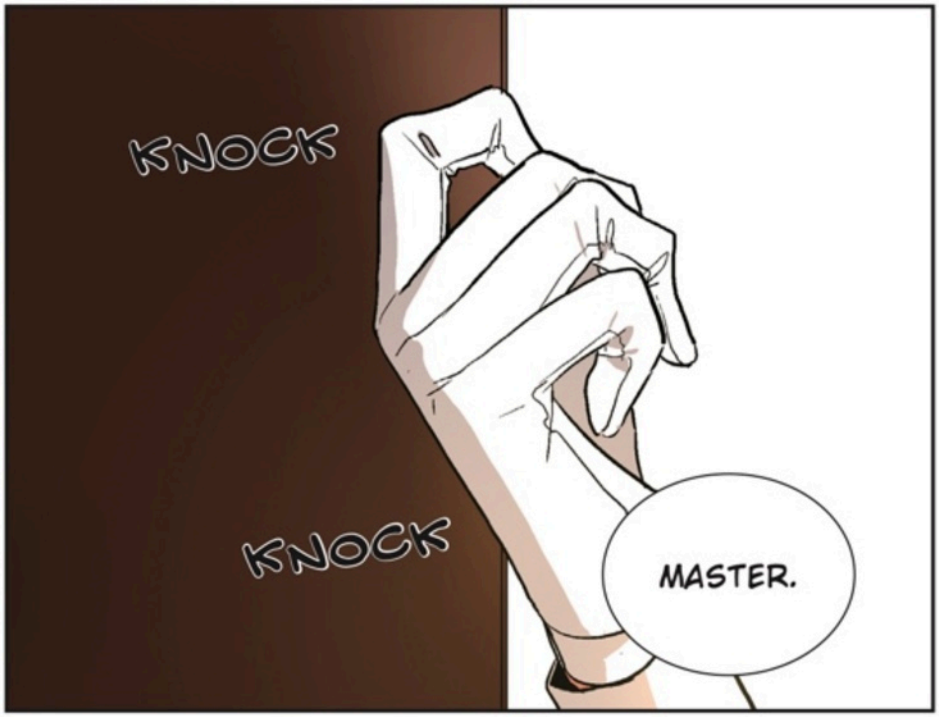
OH, SIR TAYLOR.
WHAT DO YOU THINK? DO I LOOK OKAY?

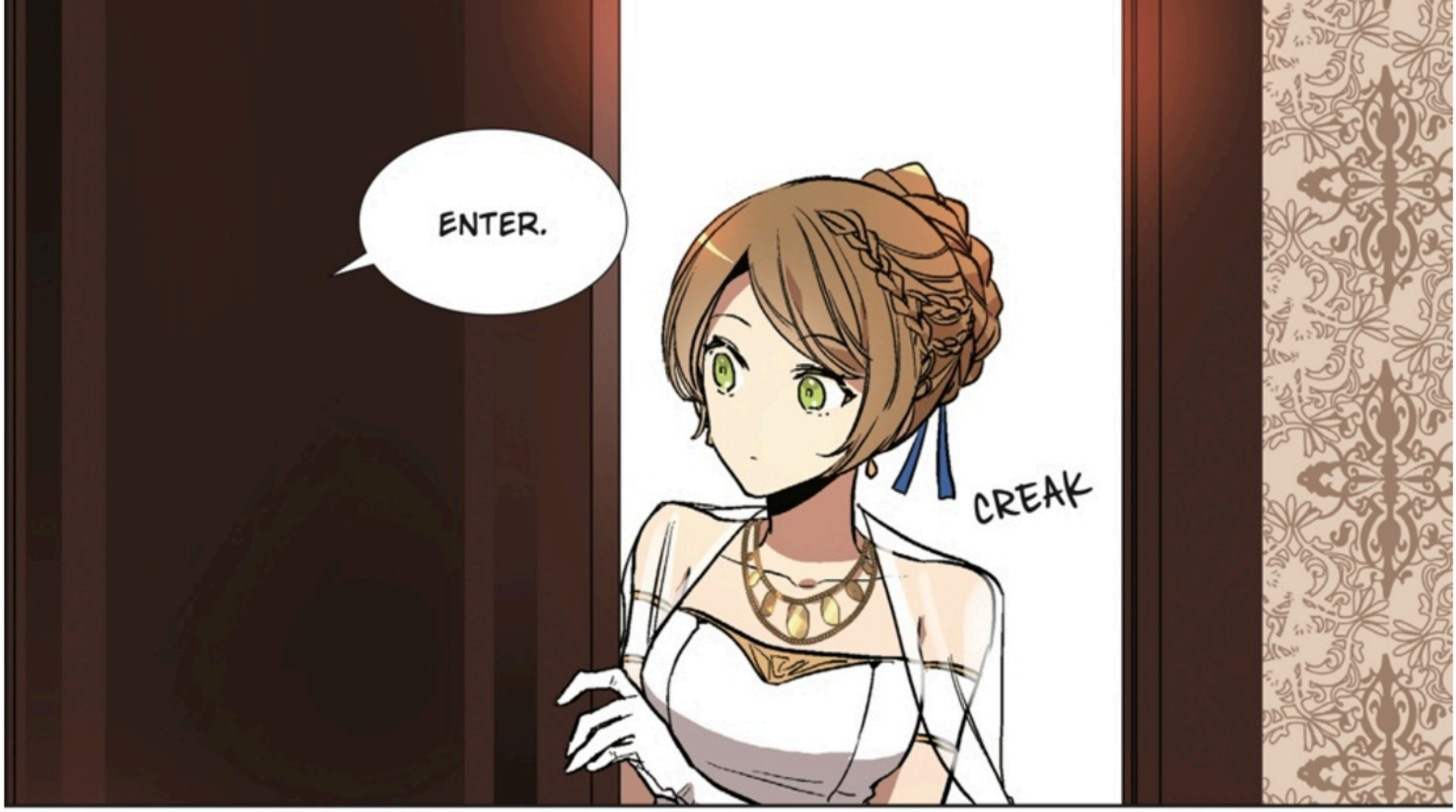
.....
.....
.....

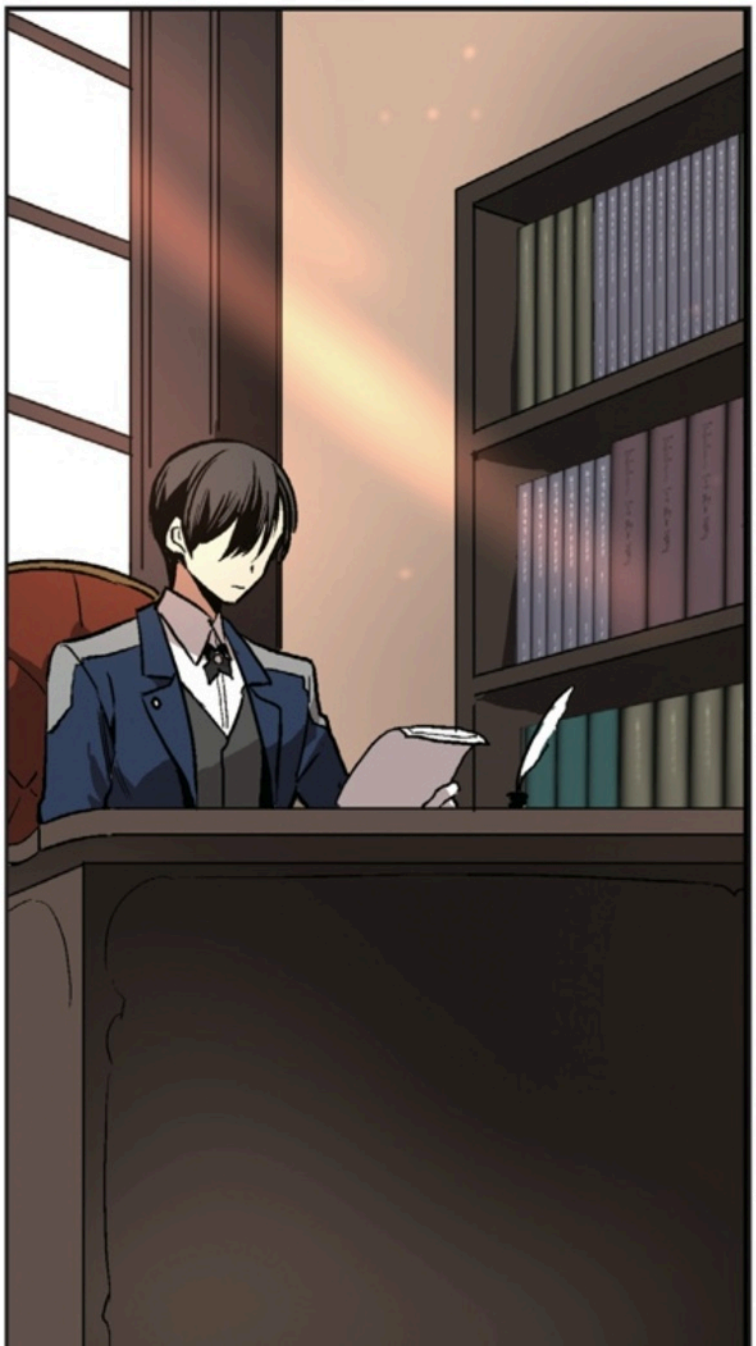

I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED SO MUCH OF SIR TAYLOR...

DUKE WYNKNIGHT IS IN HIS STUDY. FOLLOW ME, PLEASE.
THANK YOU, GIDEON.


YOU LOOK POSITIVELY LOVELY, MISS. AS CLASSY AS THE LONG HISTORY OF THIS VERY MANSION, IN WHICH—
AH, RIGHT...
[ADAM.EXE HAS STOPPED WORKING.]


KNOCK
KNOCK
MASTER.


ENTER.
CREAK



I'M FINISHING THIS UP.

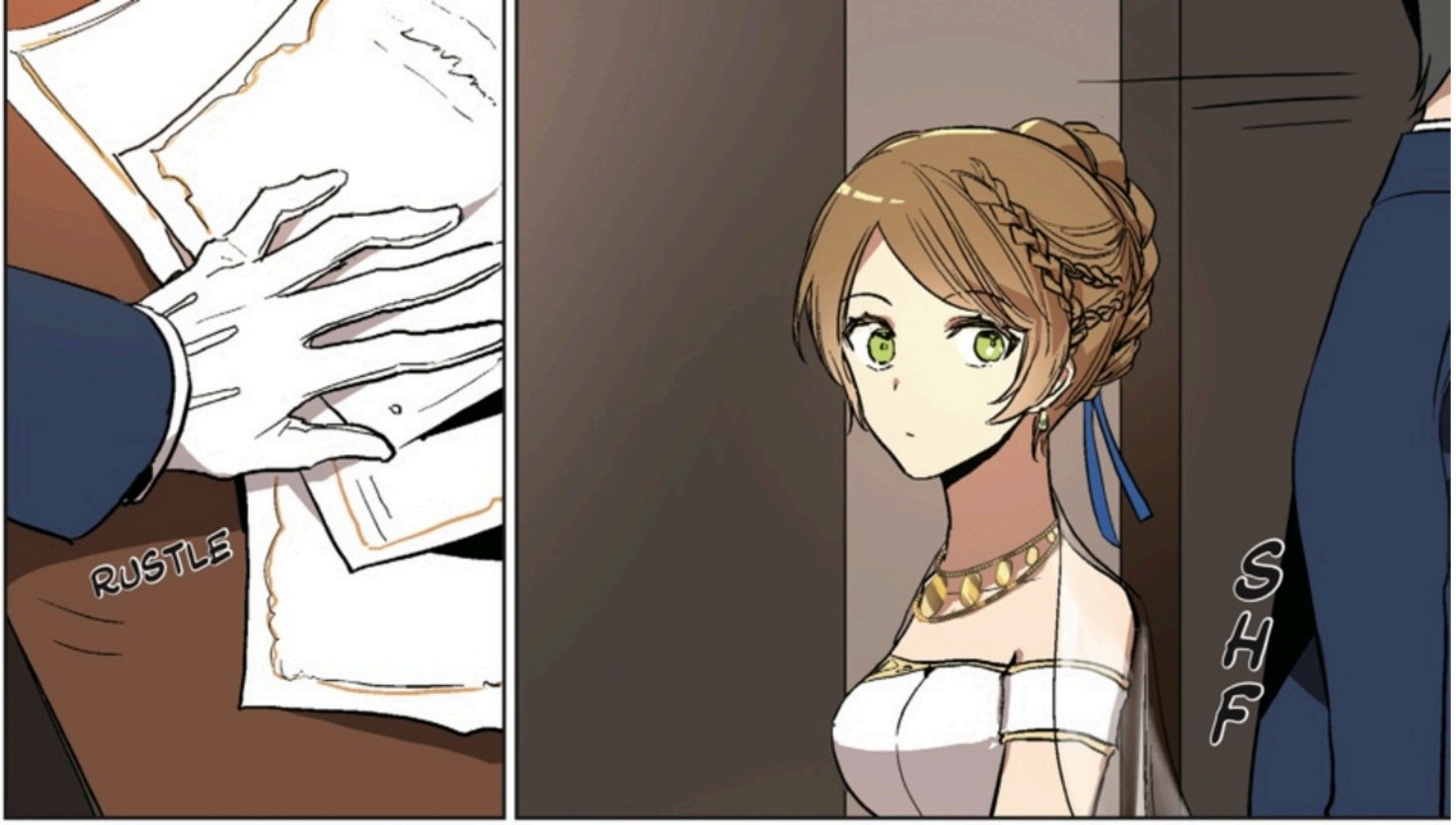
GIVE ME A MOMENT, AND WE'LL LEAVE—

.....

...DOES IT LOOK WEIRD?
WHY IS HE SILENT...? I THOUGHT HE'D AT LEAST SAY SOME SNIDE REMARK.
IS IT BECAUSE THE BUTLER IS HERE?

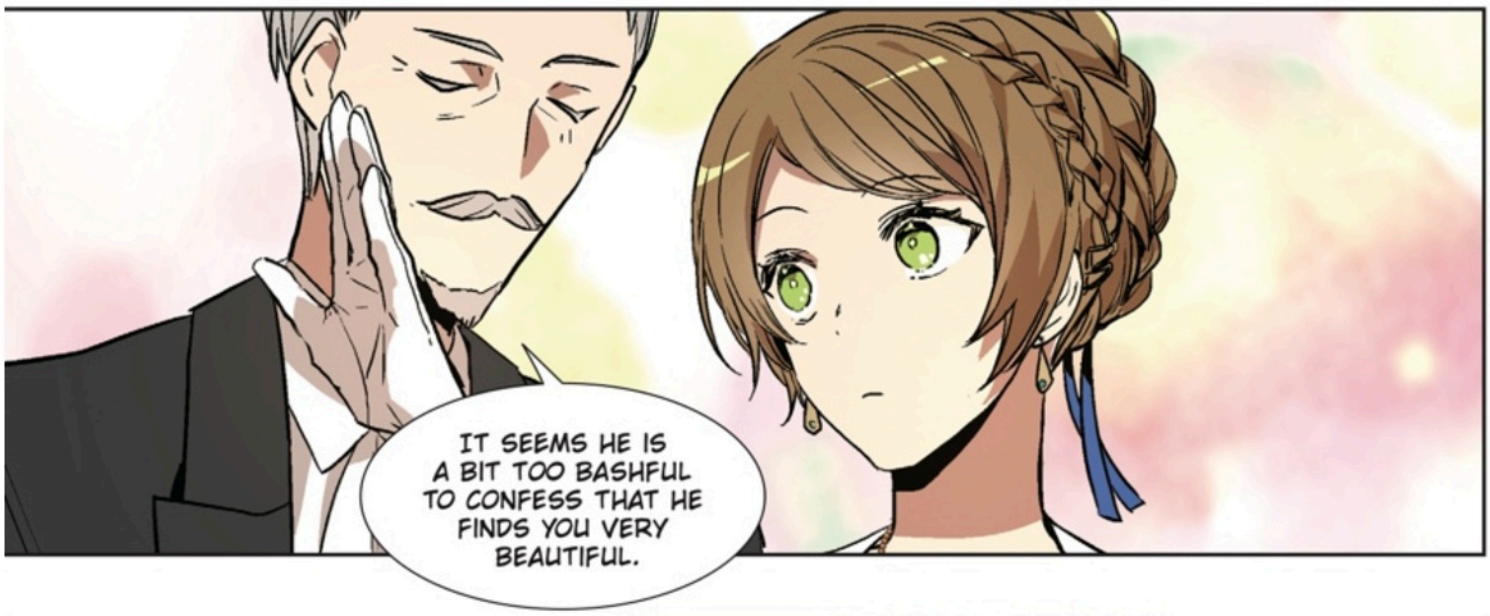
.....

FWIP


RUSTLE
SHF

I GUESS HE HATES GIVING PRAISE, EVEN IF JUST FOR COURTESY.

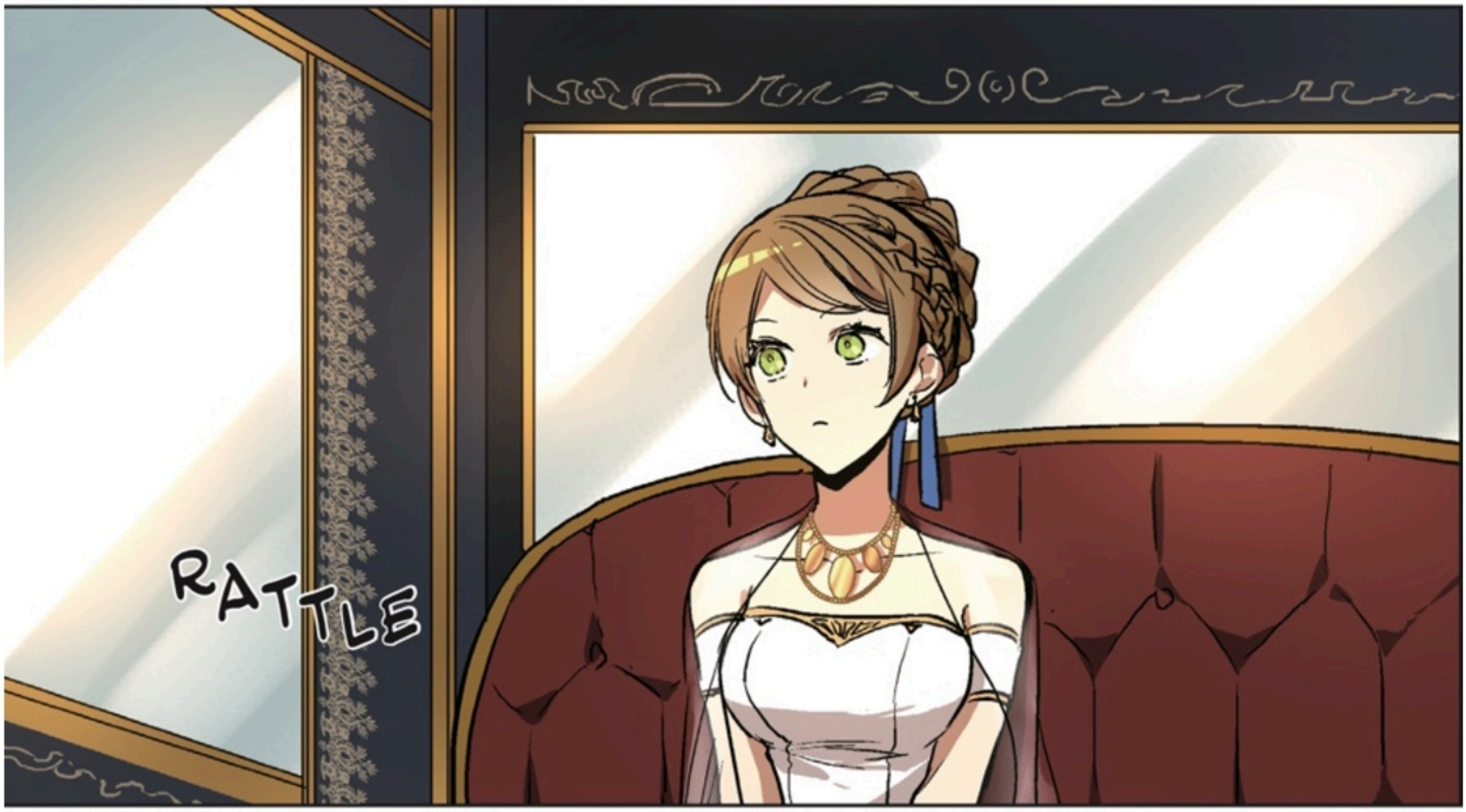
YOUR CARRIAGE HAS BEEN DRAWN.


IT SEEMS HE IS A BIT TOO BASHFUL TO CONFESS THAT HE FINDS YOU VERY BEAUTIFUL.

...GIDEON MUST HAVE SOME ROSE-COLORED GLASSES ON...
THAT SNOBBY NOBLE?

NO WAY.

RATTLE


RATTLE

OH...
...NOAH, HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE TWO MOST POPULAR SMILES OF THE BEAU MONDE?

BEAM

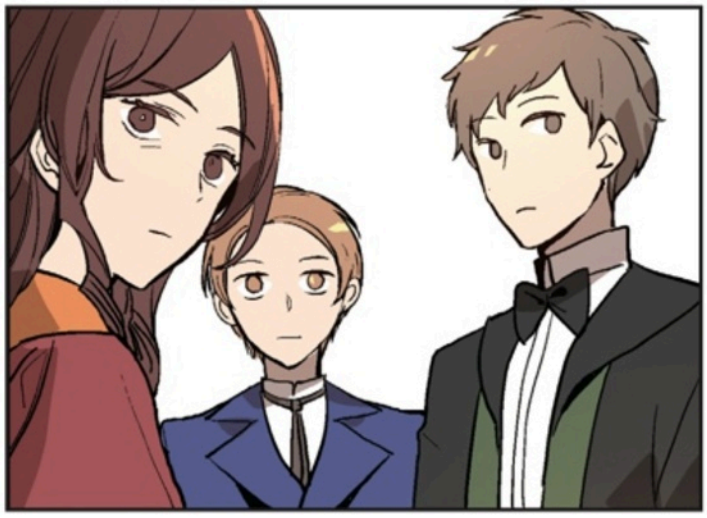
.....?

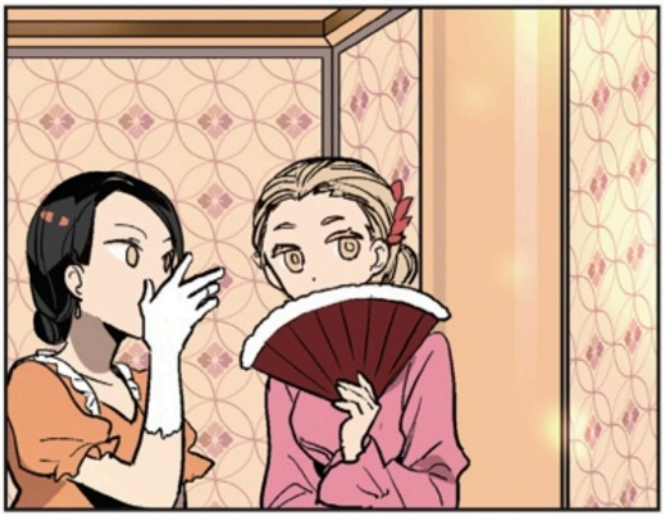
"I'M NOT SURE IF IT'S WORDS OR SHIT THAT'S COMING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH RIGHT NOW"—

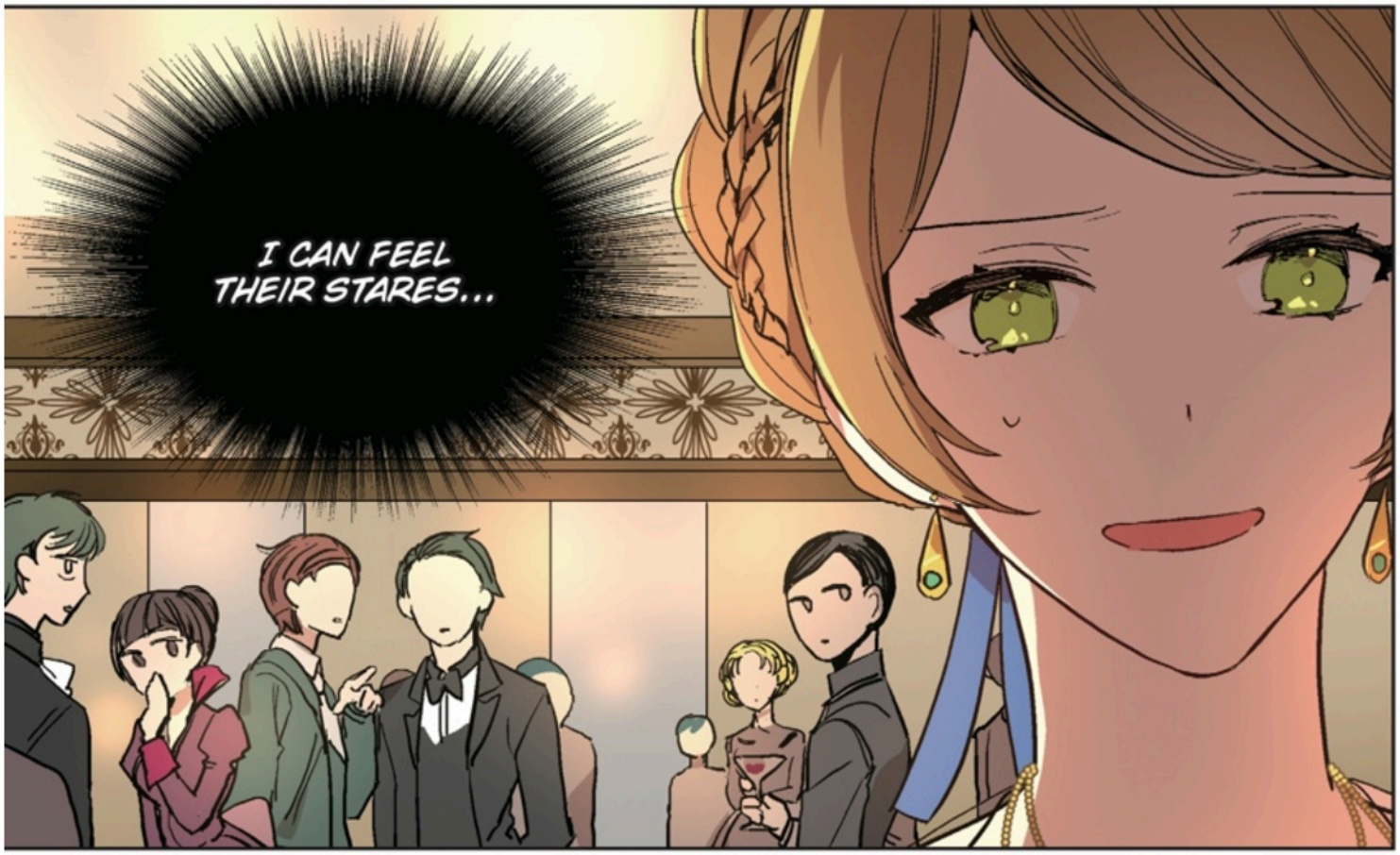
ACTUALLY... UM...NEVER MIND...

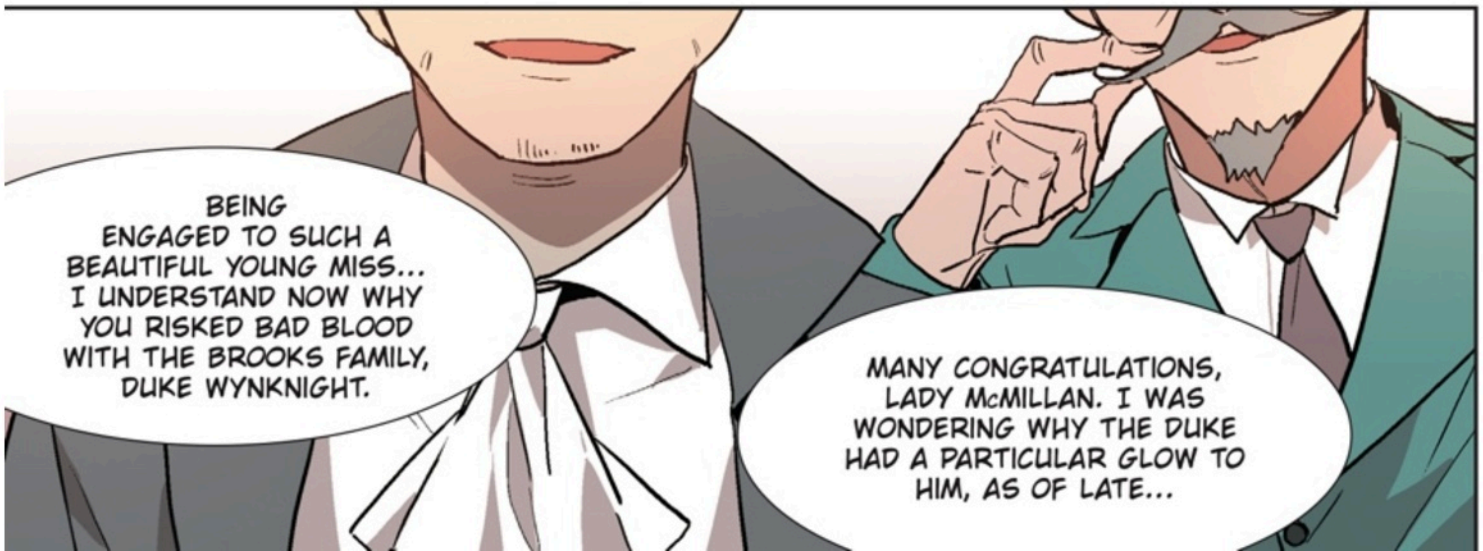
RATTLE

RATTLE

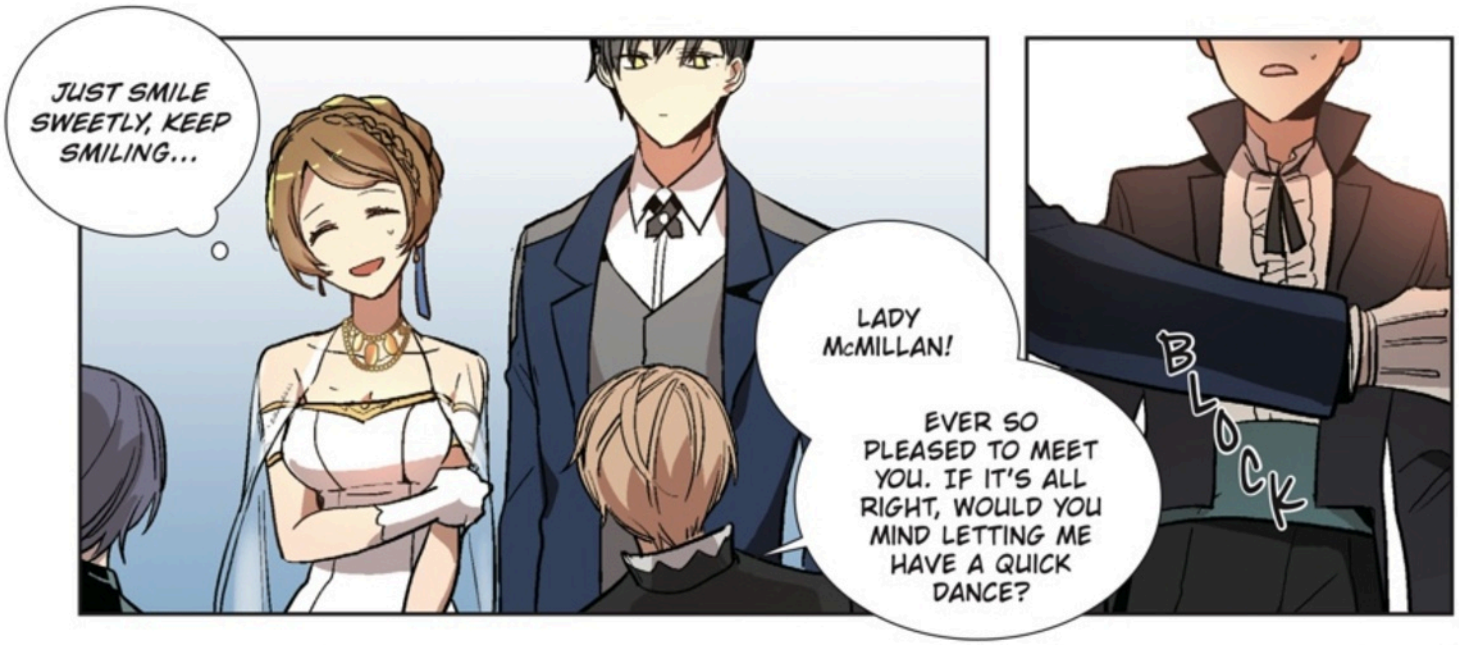


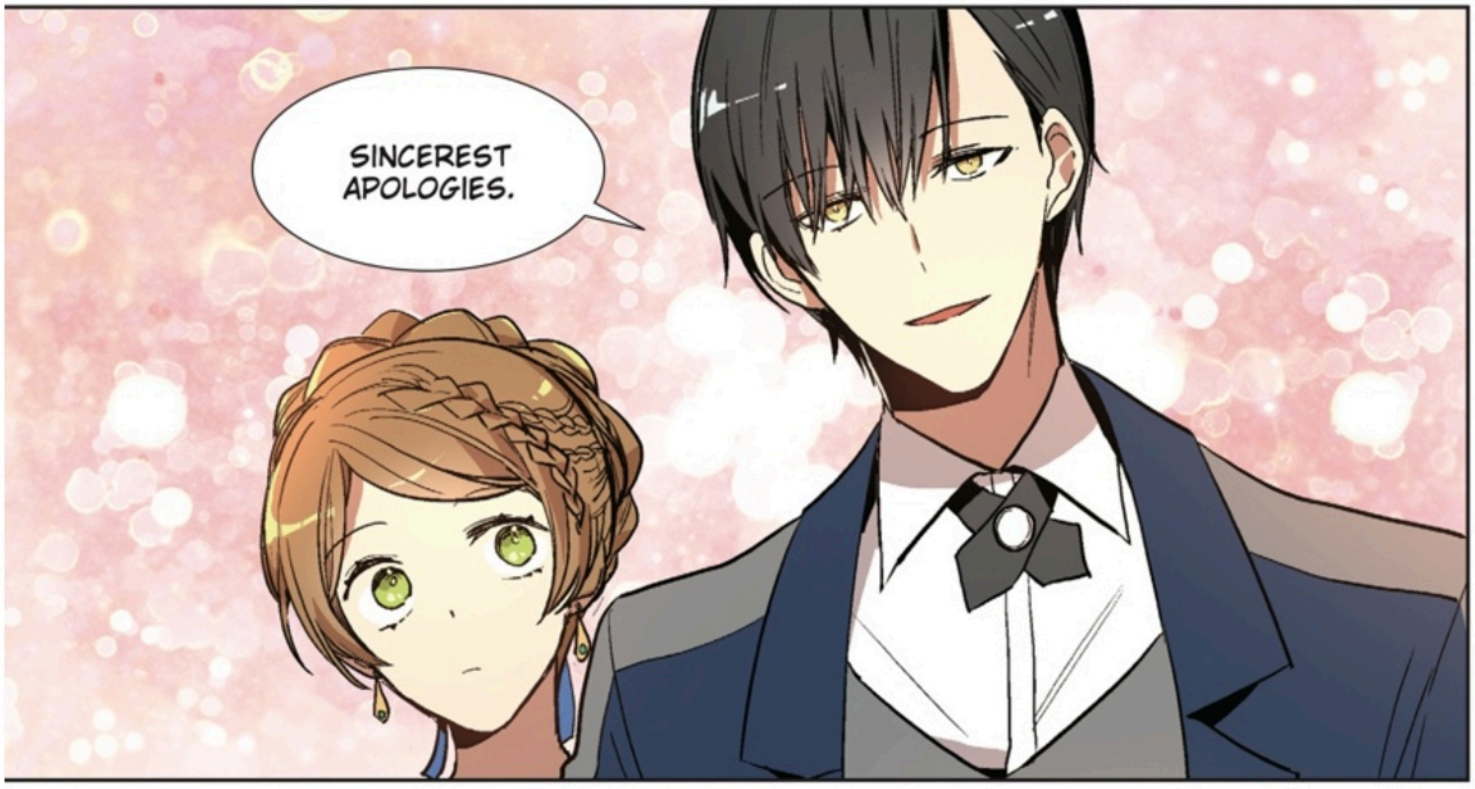


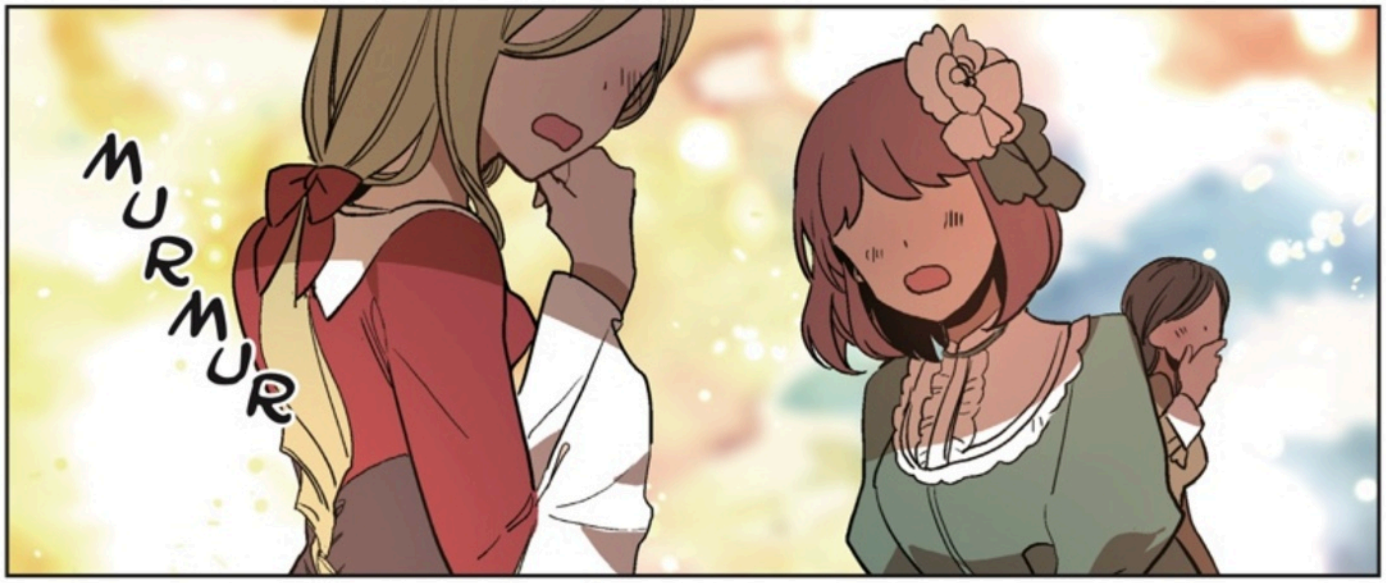

I CAN FEEL THEIR STARES...

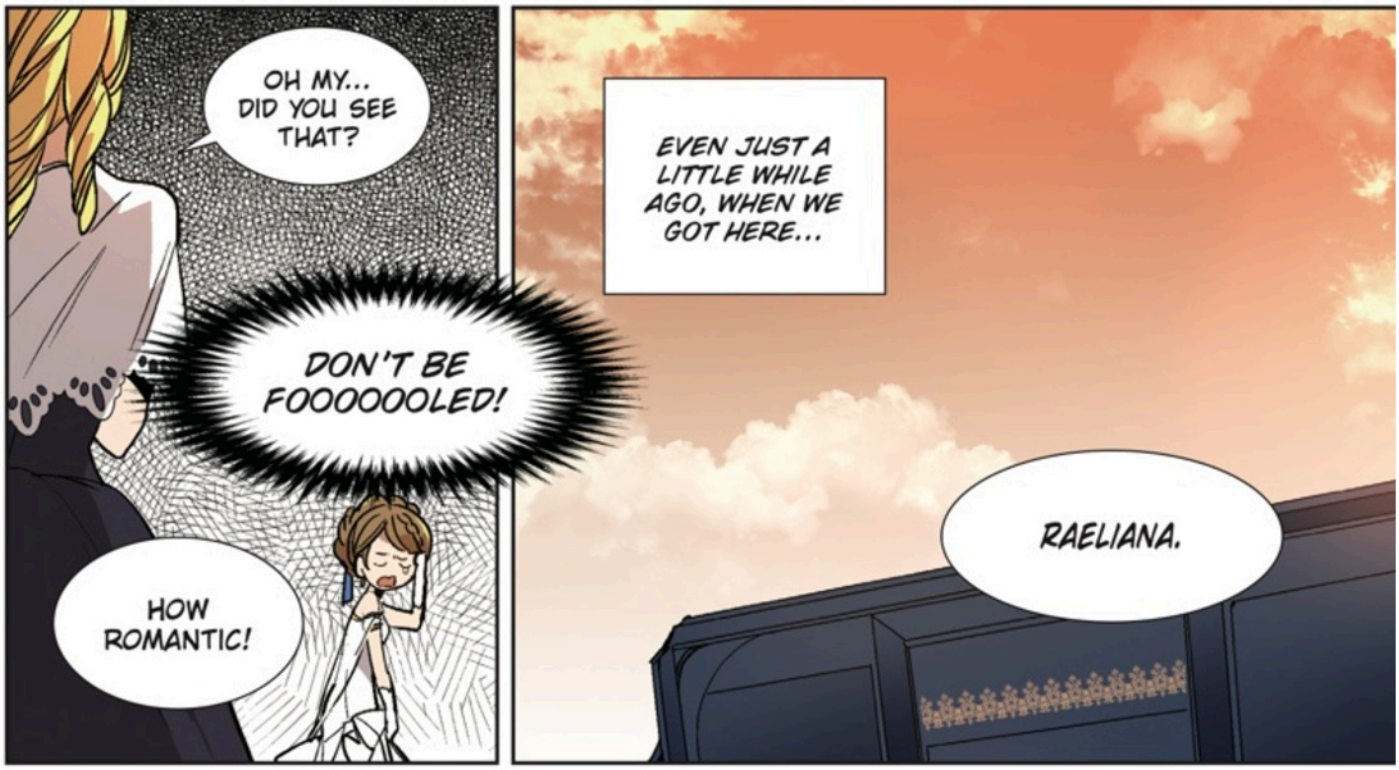

BEING ENGAGED TO SUCH A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG MISS... I UNDERSTAND NOW WHY YOU RISKED BAD BLOOD WITH THE BROOKS FAMILY, DUKE WYNKNIGHT.
MANY CONGRATULATIONS, LADY McMILLAN. I WAS WONDERING WHY THE DUKE HAD A PARTICULAR GLOW TO HIM, AS OF LATE...

AH, IT'S THE "NOAH WYNKNIGHT STYLE" SMILE.
HA-HA, IS THAT SO?
SLIDE
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LUCKY I FEEL...
...TO HAVE HAD THE CHANCE TO MEET HER.
EWGH ...!

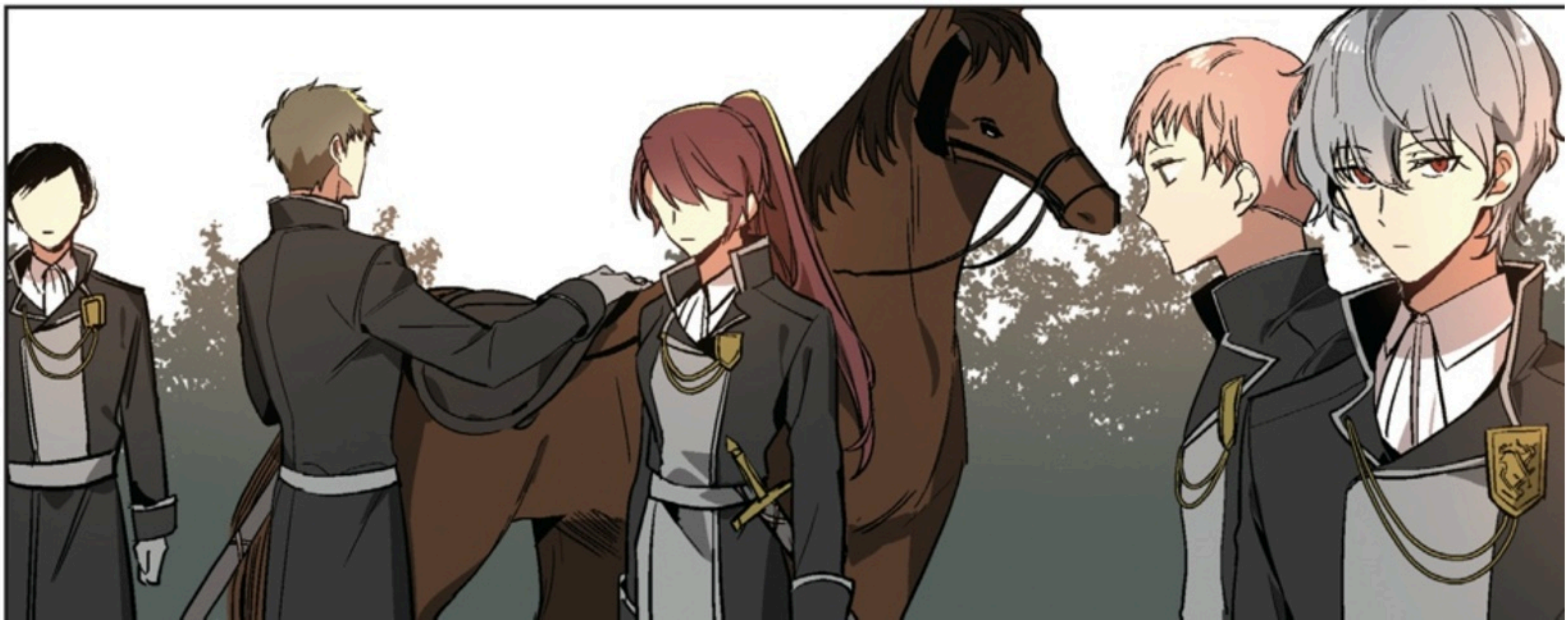

JUST SMILE SWEETLY, KEEP SMILING...
LADY McMILLAN!
EVER SO PLEASED TO MEET YOU. IF IT'S ALL RIGHT, WOULD YOU MIND LETTING ME HAVE A QUICK DANCE?
BLOCK

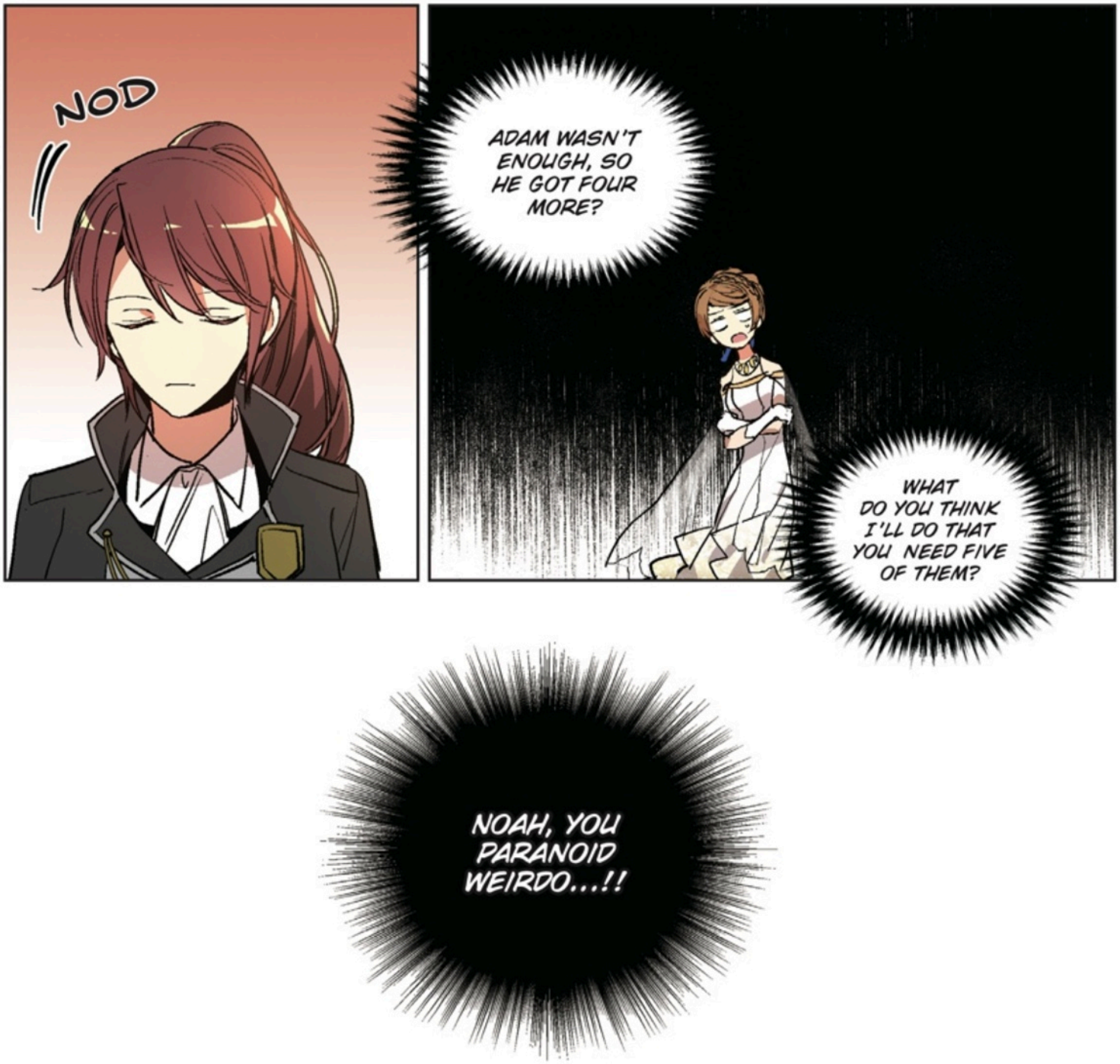

SINCEREST APOLOGIES.

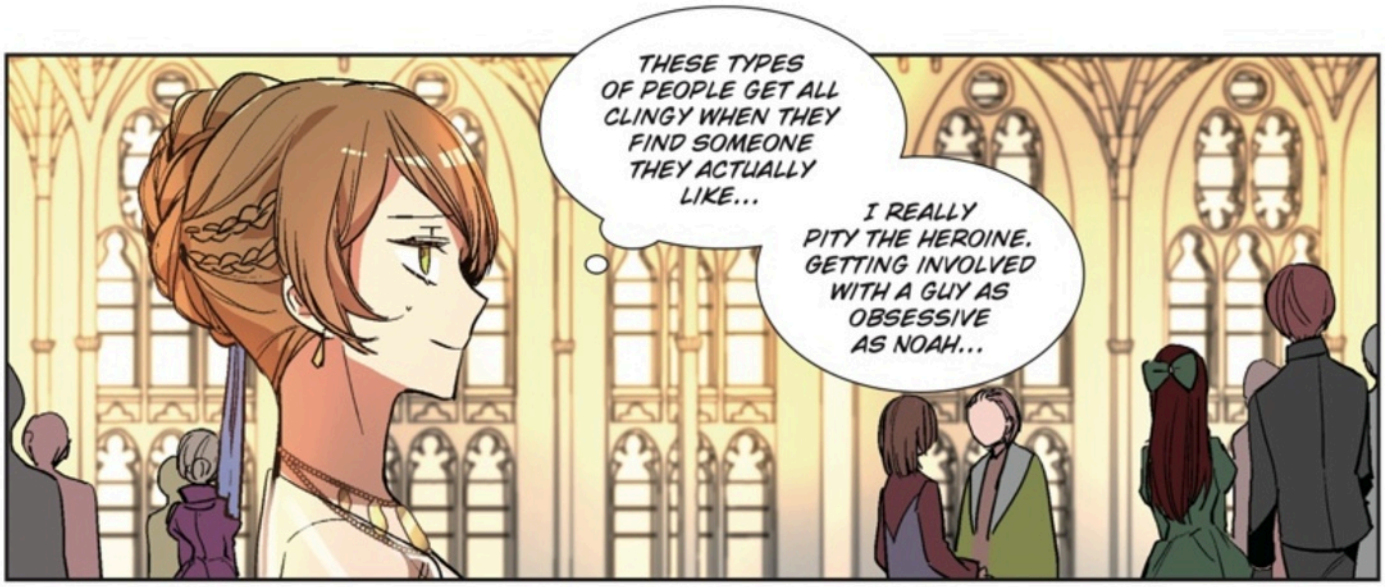

MURMUR


OH MY... DID YOU SEE THAT?
DON'T BE FOOOOOOLED!
HOW ROMANTIC!
EVEN JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO, WHEN WE GOT HERE...
RAELIANA.

FROM NOW ON, SEE THAT YOU DON'T LEAVE MY SIGHT FOR MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES.
WAIT, WHAT TYPE OF NONSENSE...
NOAH, A LADY NEEDS TIME TO FIX HER MAKEUP.
POINT

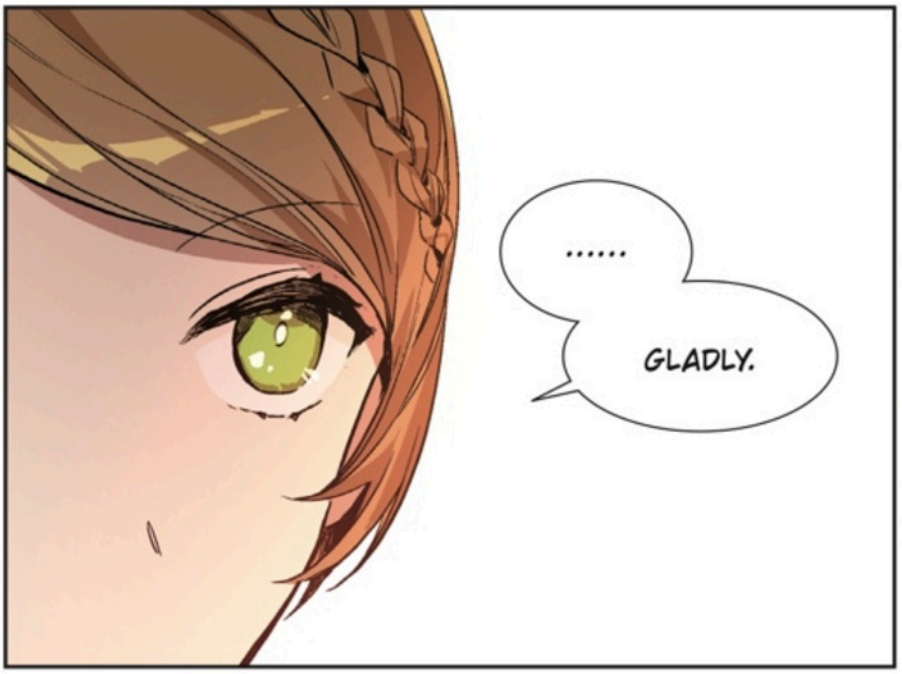


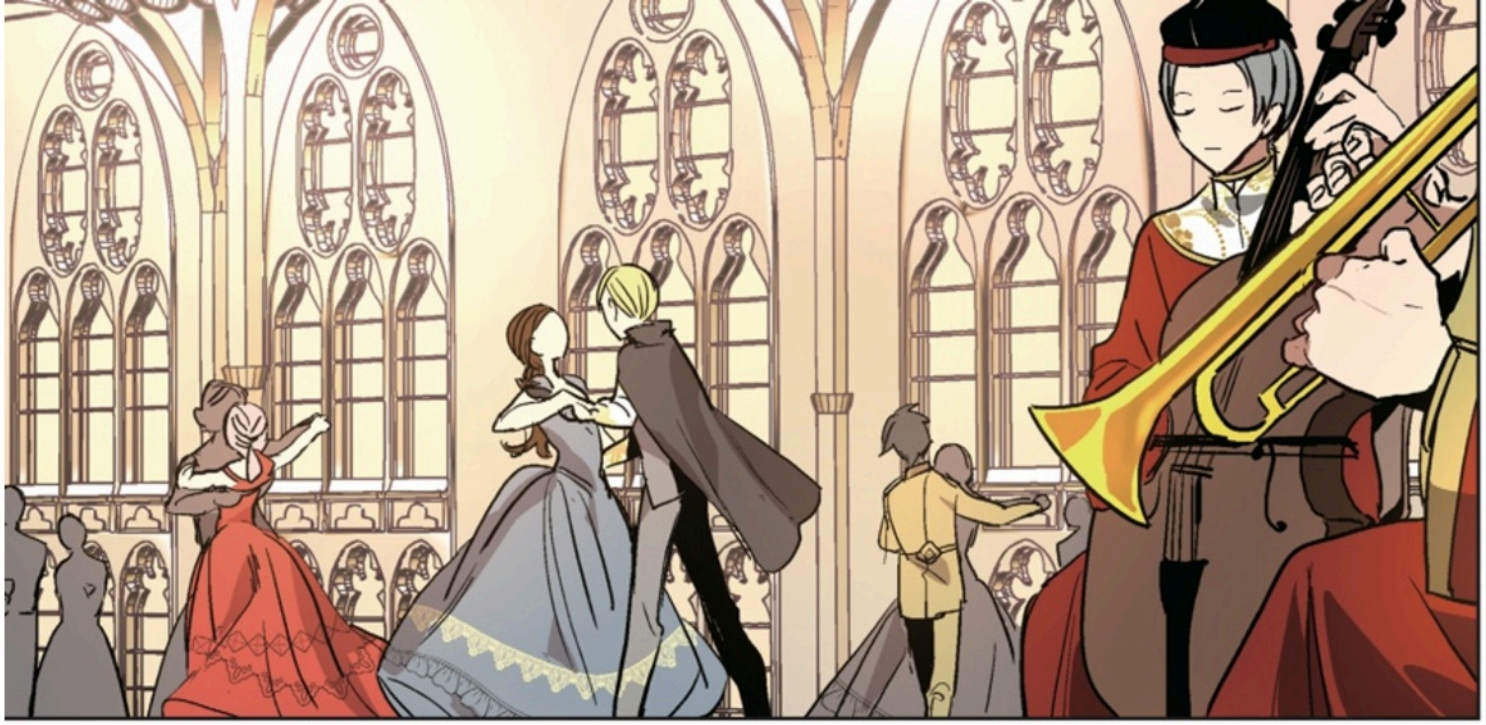

NOD
ADAM WASN'T ENOUGH, SO HE GOT FOUR MORE?
WHAT DO YOU THINK I'LL DO THAT YOU NEED FIVE OF THEM?
NOAH, YOU PARANOID WEIRDO...!!

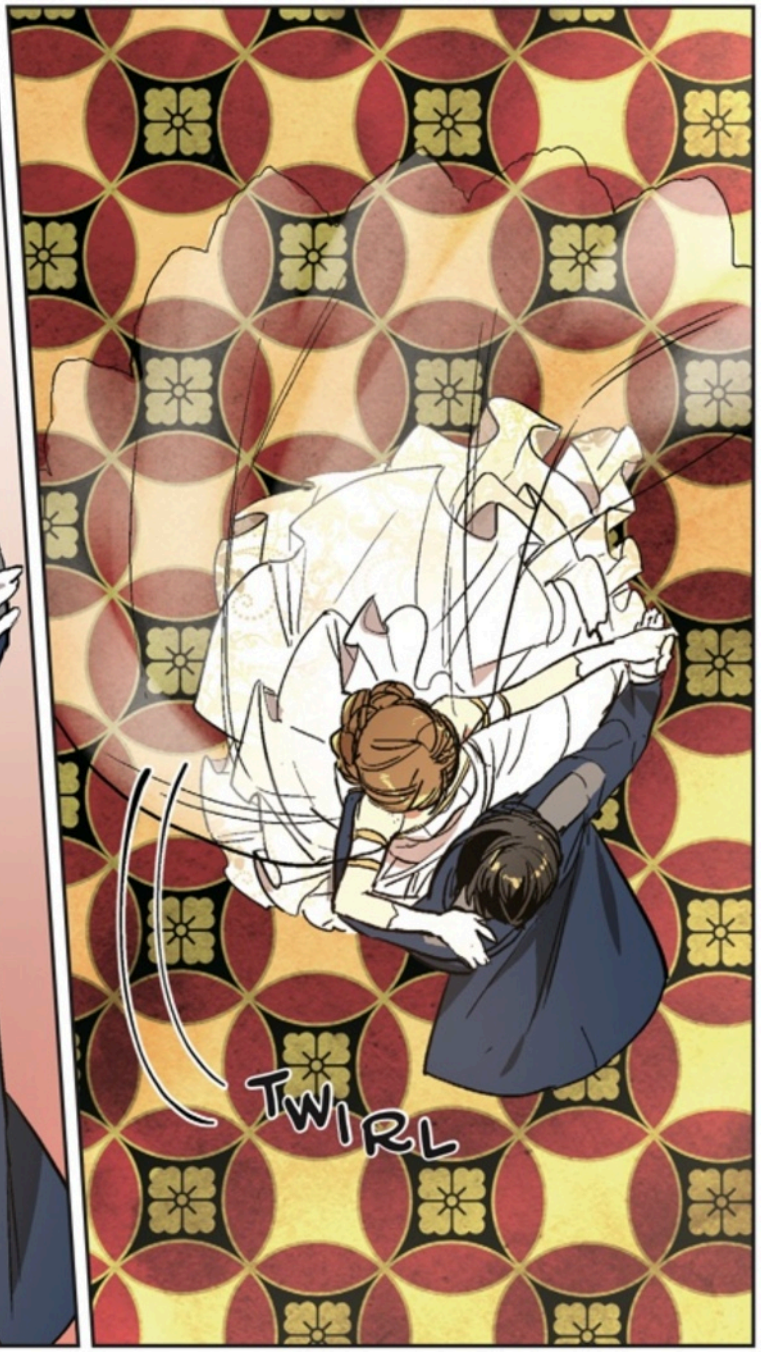

THESE TYPES OF PEOPLE GET ALL CLINGY WHEN THEY FIND SOMEONE THEY ACTUALLY LIKE...
I REALLY PITY THE HEROINE. GETTING INVOLVED WITH A GUY AS OBSESSIVE AS NOAH...

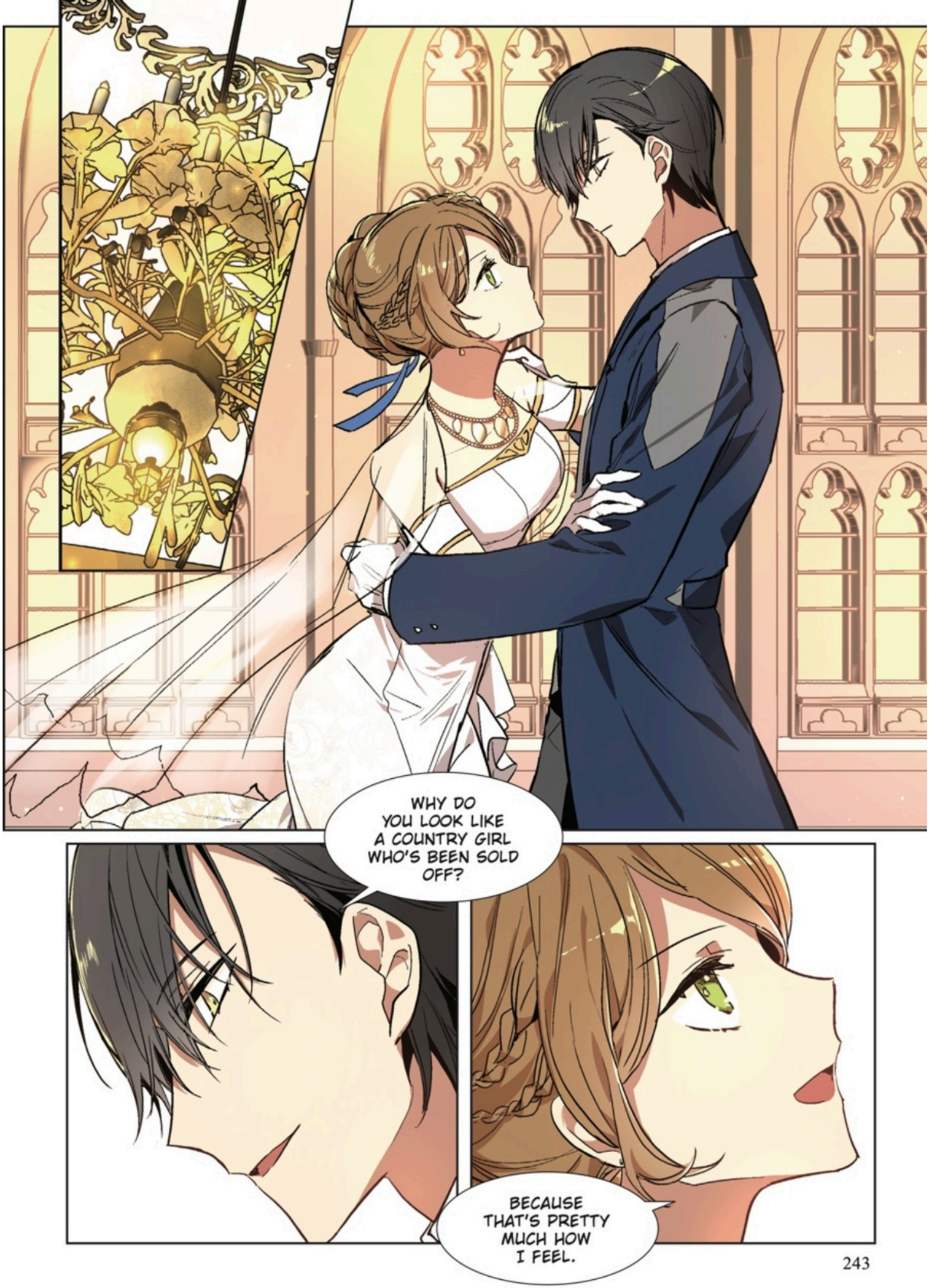
SHF

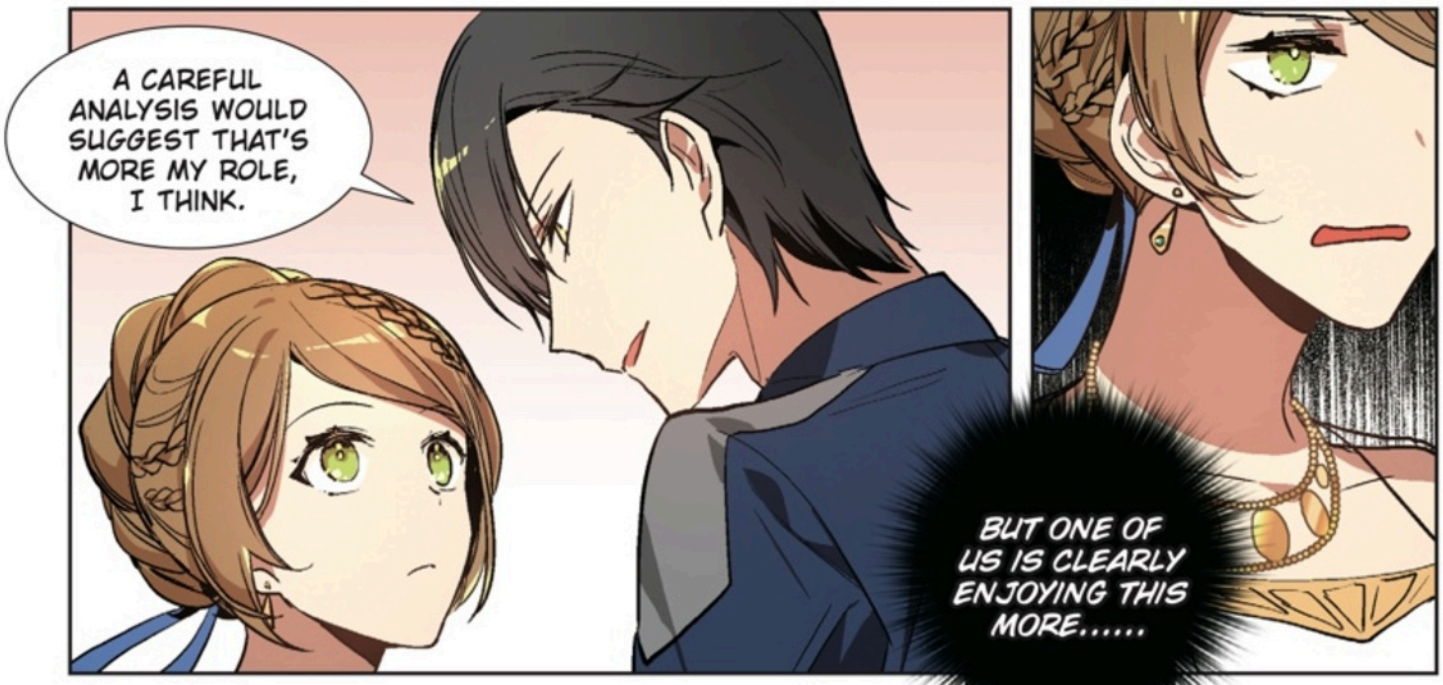
WOULD YOU INDULGE ME WITH THIS ONE DANCE?


.....
GLADLY.



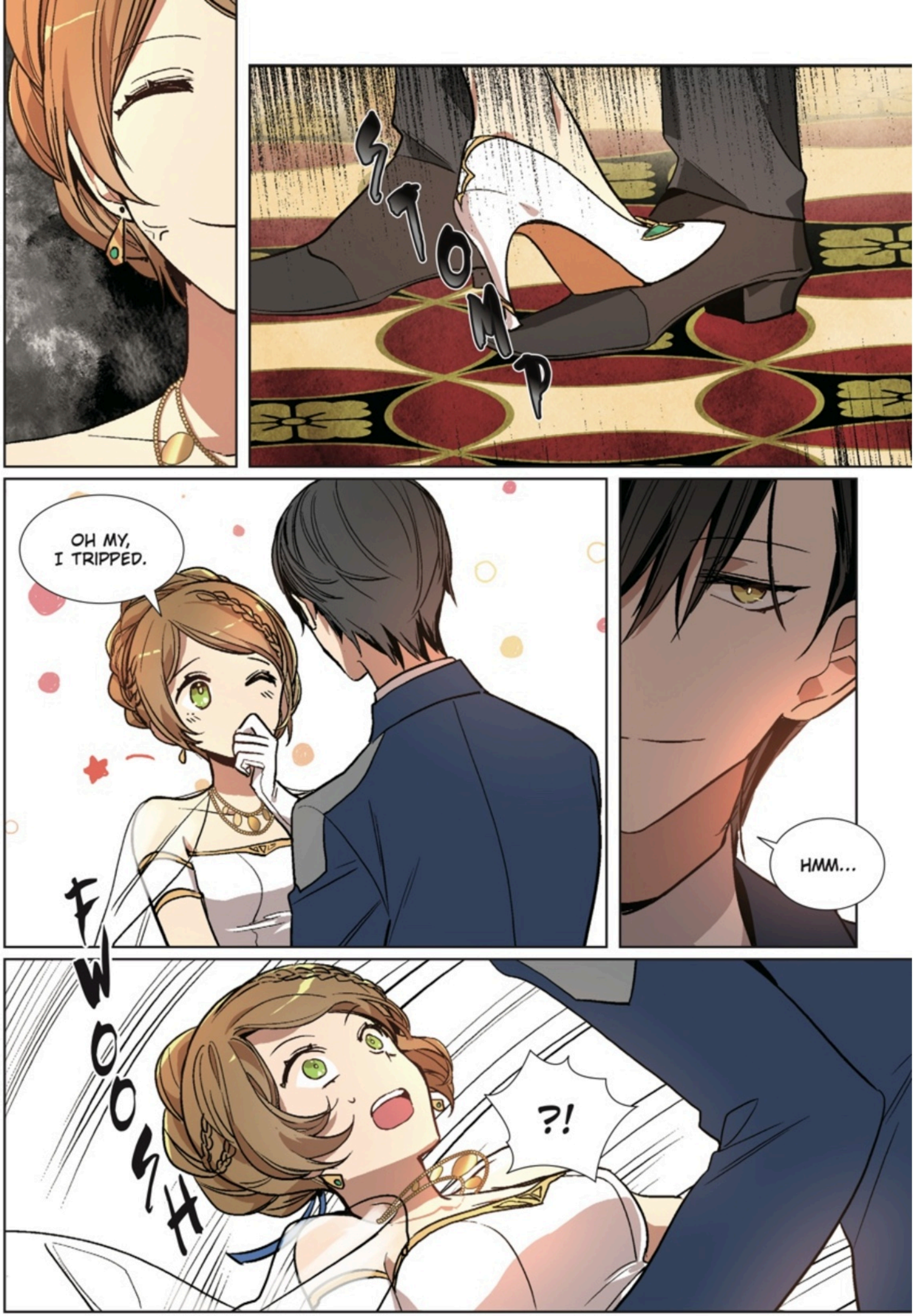

TWIRL


WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE A COUNTRY GIRL WHO'S BEEN SOLD OFF?
BECAUSE THAT'S PRETTY MUCH HOW I FEEL.

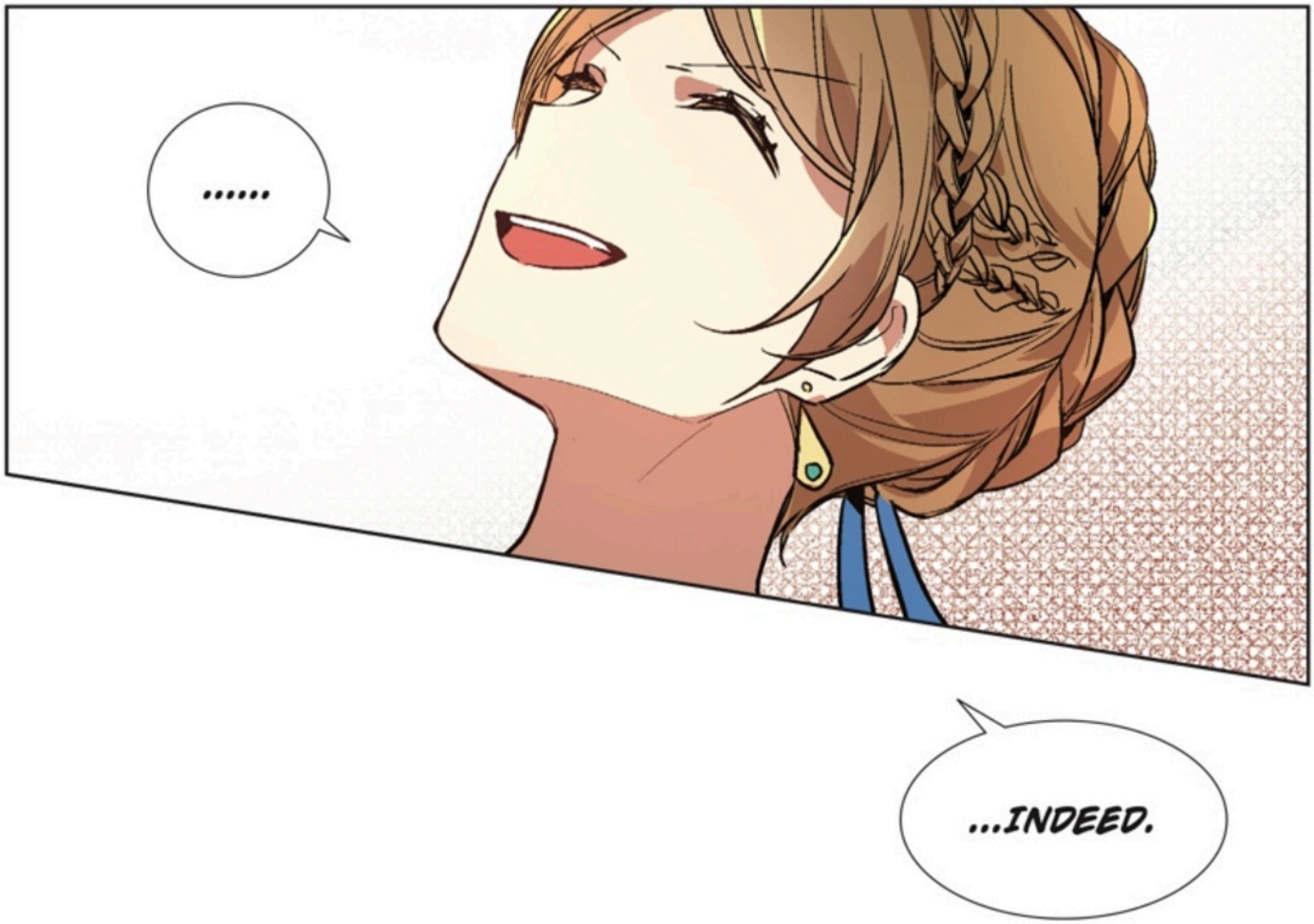

A CAREFUL ANALYSIS WOULD SUGGEST THAT'S MORE MY ROLE, I THINK.
BUT ONE OF US IS CLEARLY ENJOYING THIS MORE.....

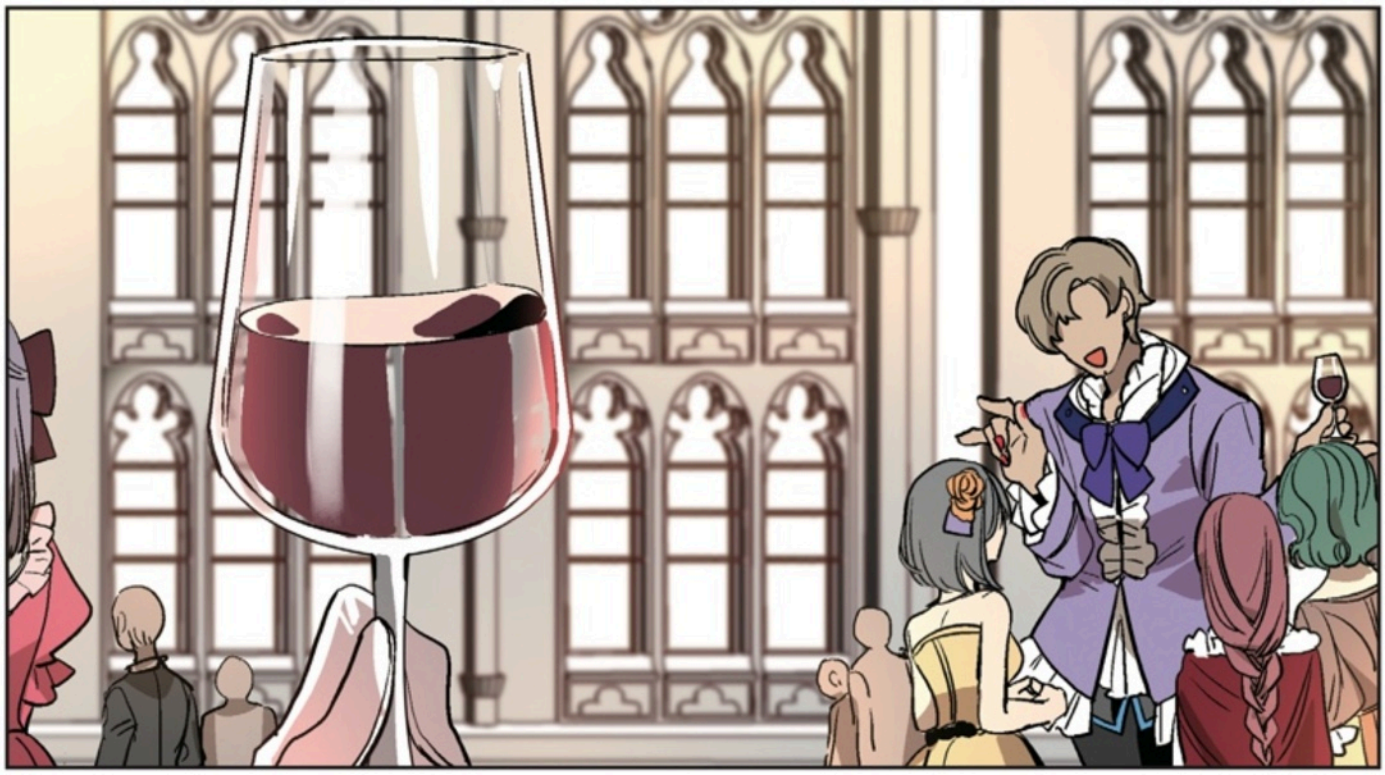
KEEP SMILING.
IF YOU INTEND TO FOOL ANYBODY, THAT IS.

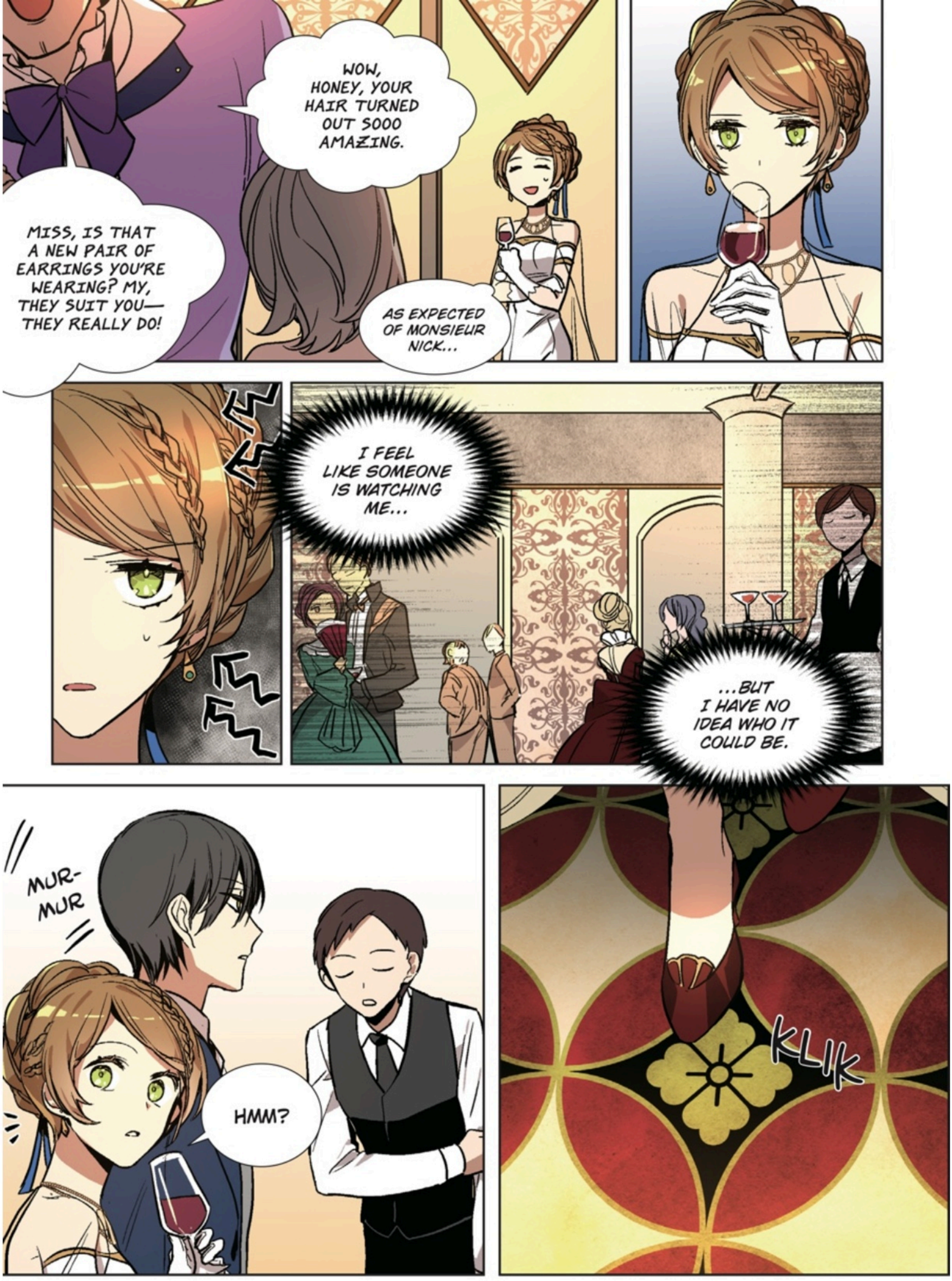
Two-faced phony.
Extortionist.
The foul things that come out of your mouth...I should tell people that this is what you're really like.
What of it? You're the one calling me two-faced.

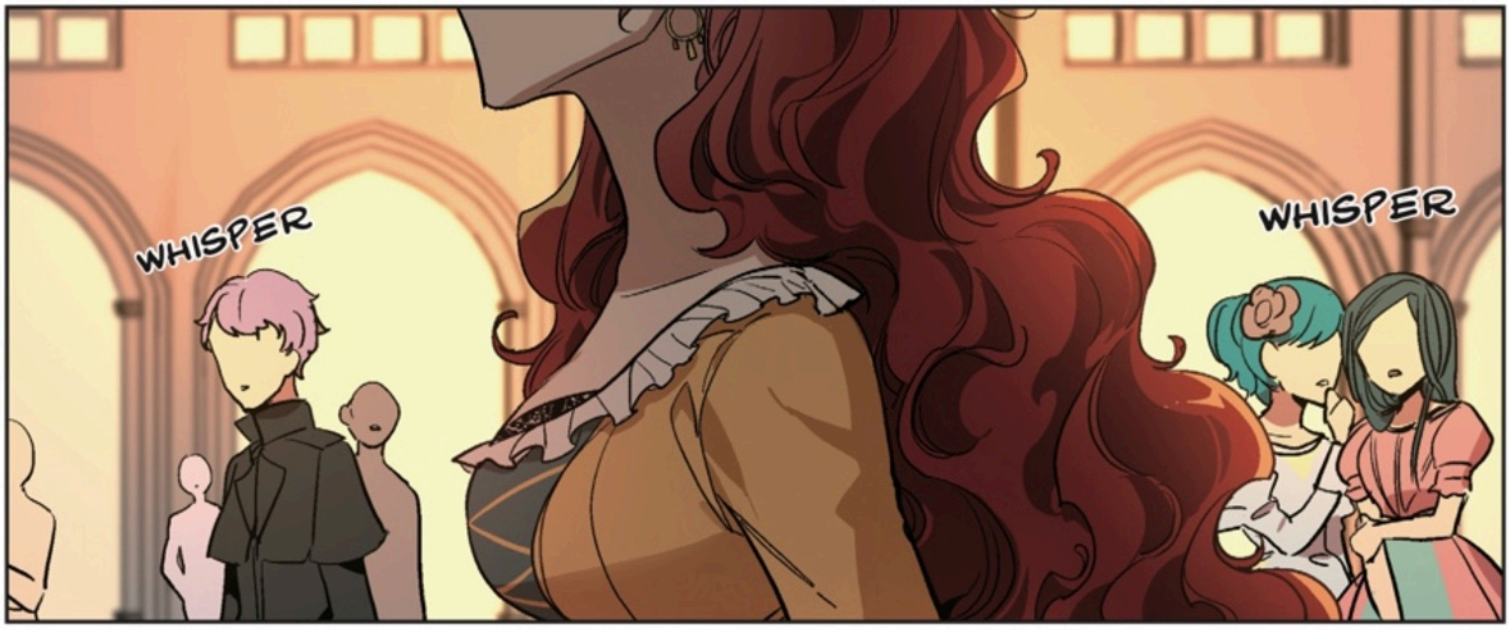

STOMP
OH MY, I TRIPPED.
HMM...
FWOOSH
?!

GRAB
TUG
OOOH!
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
IT SEEMS YOU NEED A BIT MORE PRACTICE, RAELIANA.

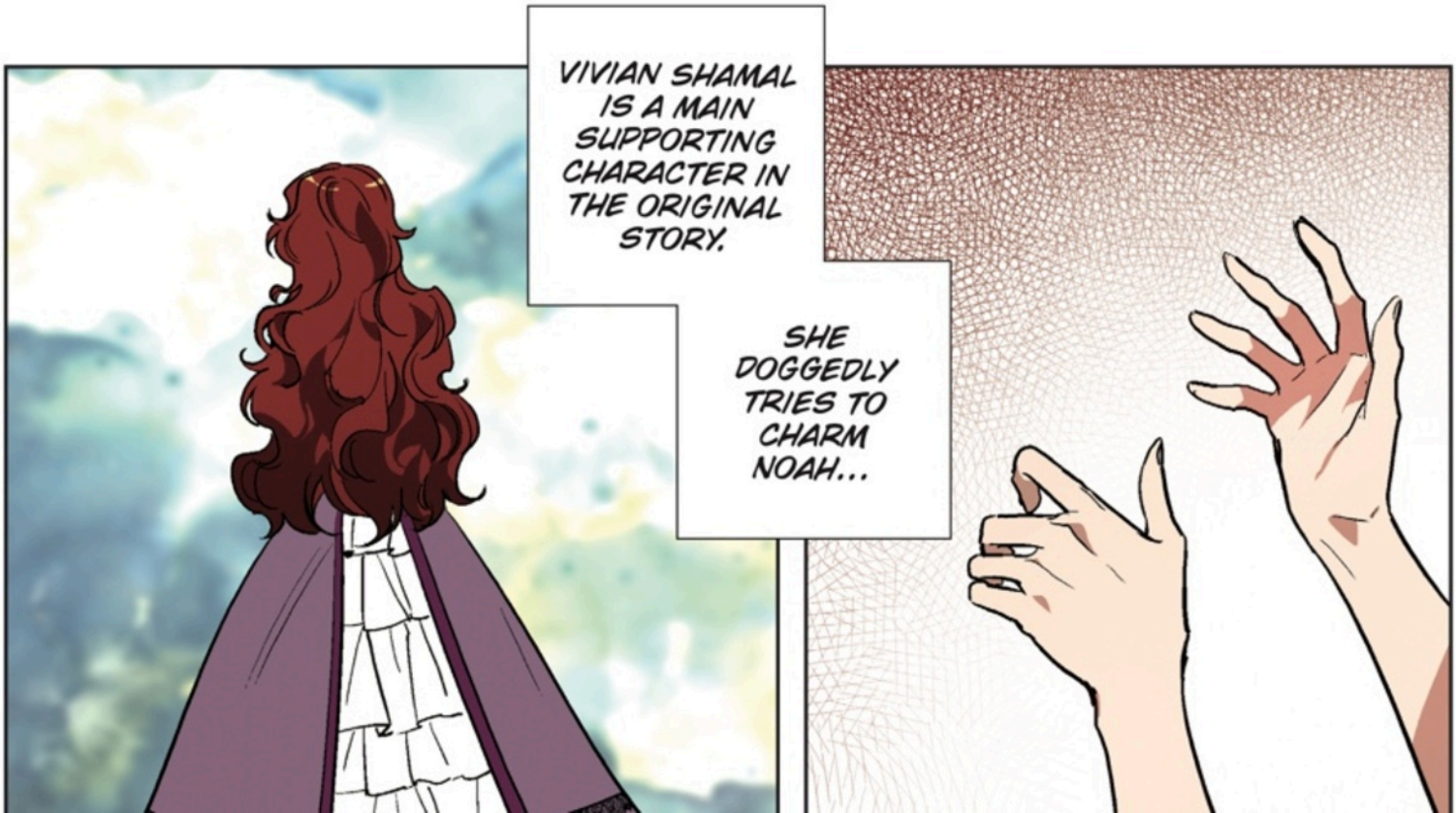

.....
...INDEED.

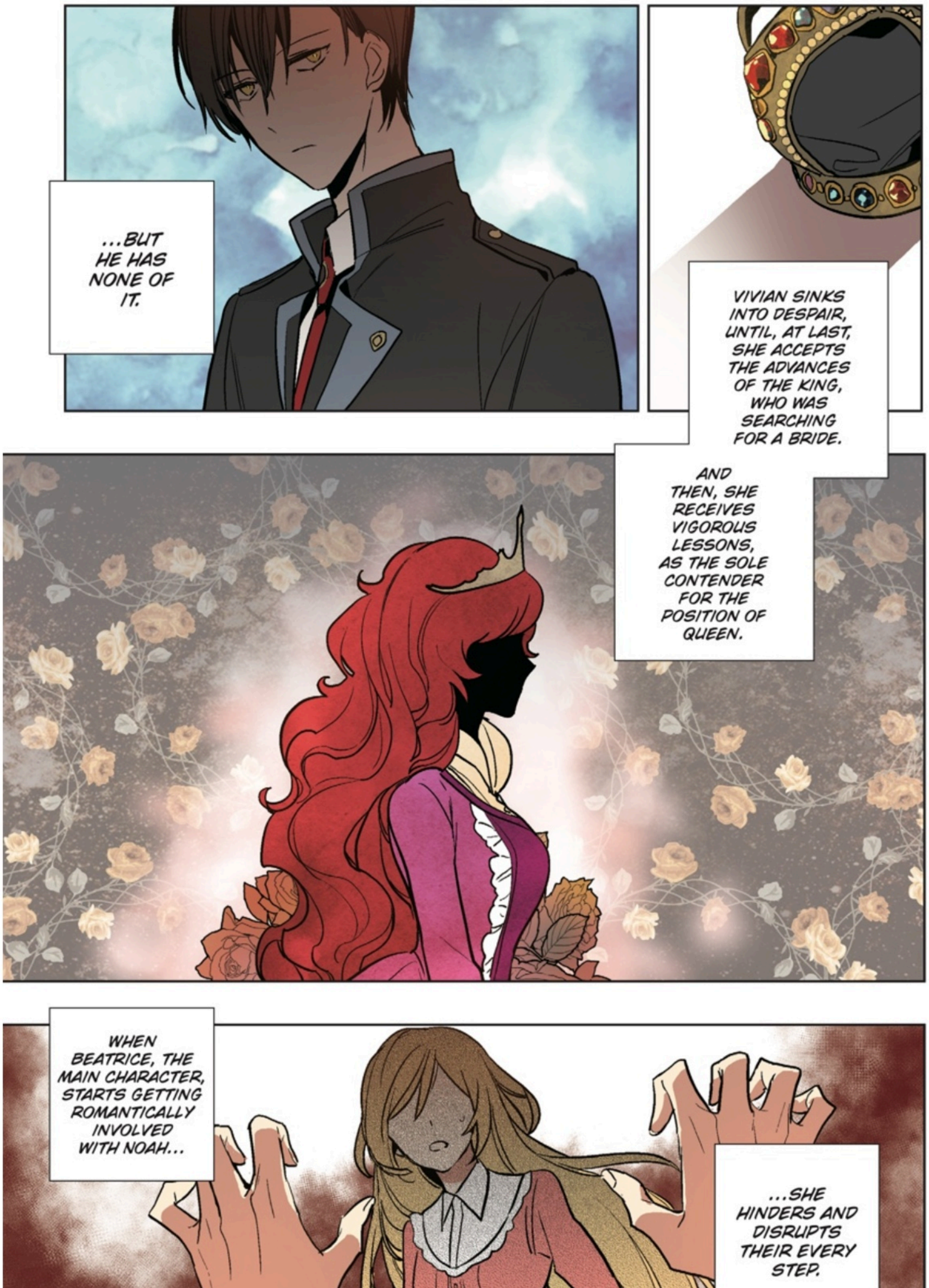



WOW, HONEY, YOUR HAIR TURNED OUT SOOO AMAZING.
MISS, IS THAT A NEW PAIR OF EARRINGS YOU'RE WEARING? MY, THEY SUIT YOU— THEY REALLY DO!
AS EXPECTED OF MONSIEUR NICK...
I FEEL LIKE SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME...
...BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHO IT COULD BE.
MUR-MUR
HMM?
KLIK


WHISPER
WHISPER

...VIVIAN SHAMAL. I THOUGHT THAT NAME SOUNDED FAMILIAR...

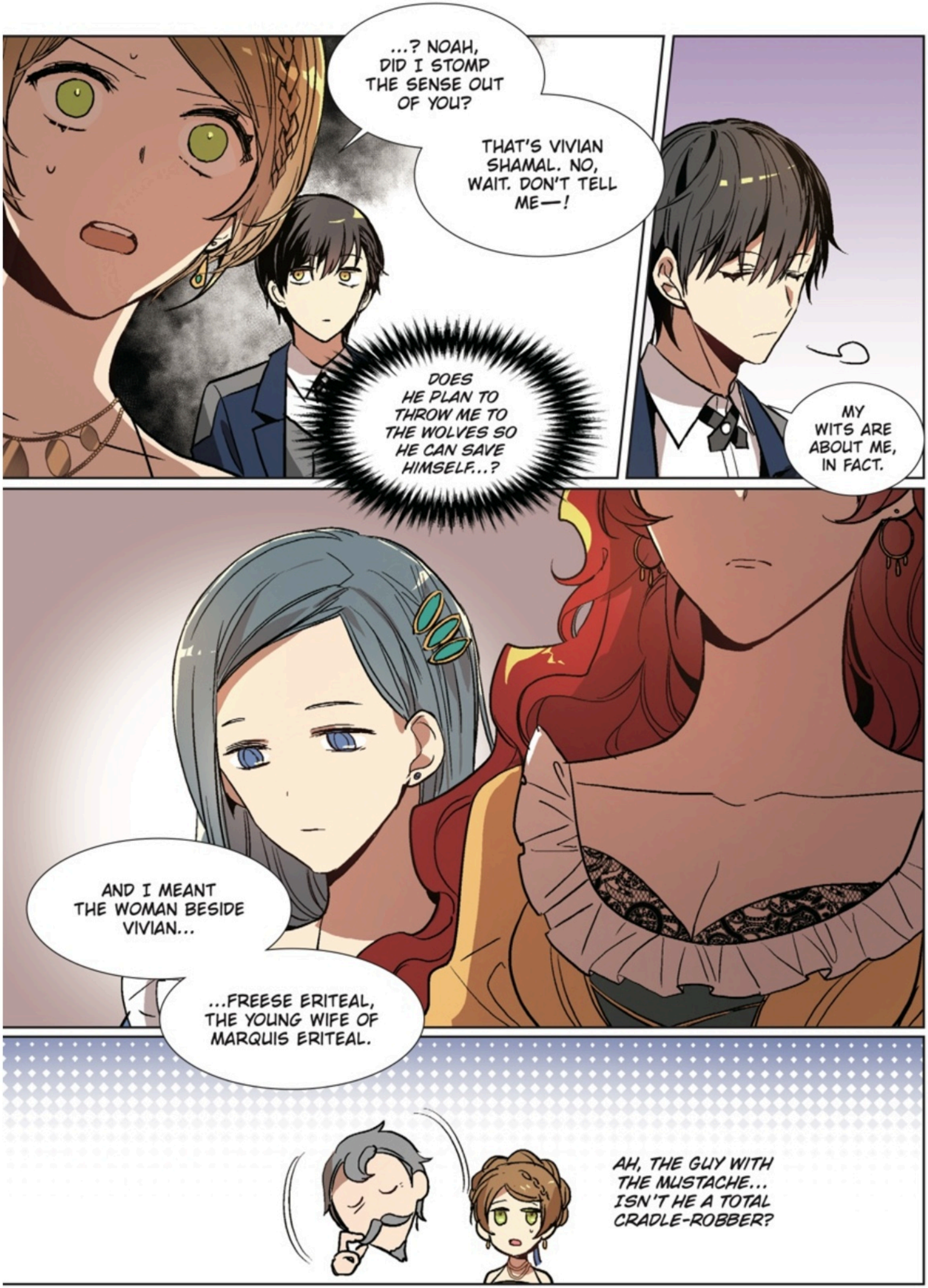

VIVIAN SHAMAL IS A MAIN SUPPORTING CHARACTER IN THE ORIGINAL STORY.
SHE DOGGEDLY TRIES TO CHARM NOAH...

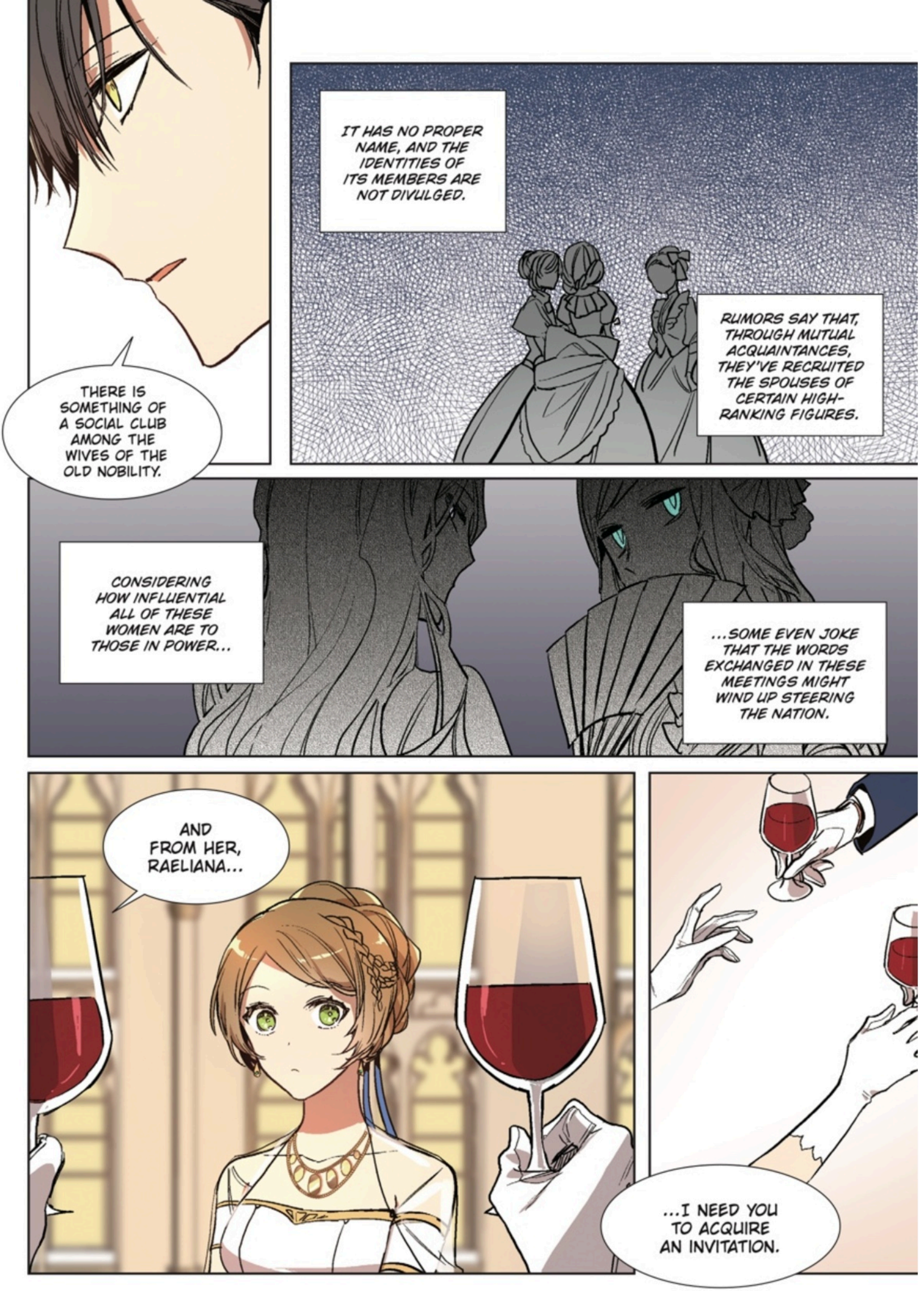

...BUT HE HAS NONE OF IT.
VIVIAN SINKS INTO DESPAIR, UNTIL, AT LAST, SHE ACCEPTS THE ADVANCES OF THE KING, WHO WAS SEARCHING FOR A BRIDE.
AND THEN, SHE RECEIVES VIGOROUS LESSONS, AS THE SOLE CONTENDER FOR THE POSITION OF QUEEN.
WHEN BEATRICE, THE MAIN CHARACTER, STARTS GETTING ROMANTICALLY INVOLVED WITH NOAH...
...SHE HINDERS AND DISRUPTS THEIR EVERY STEP.

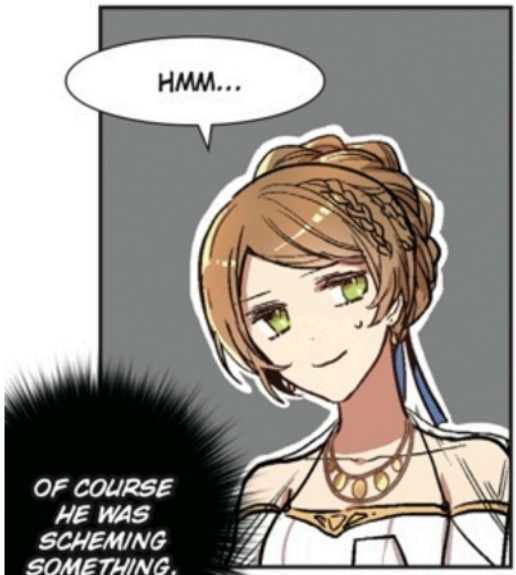
THE NOVEL'S SO-CALLED VILLAINESS...
...IS VIVIAN SHAMAL HERSELF.

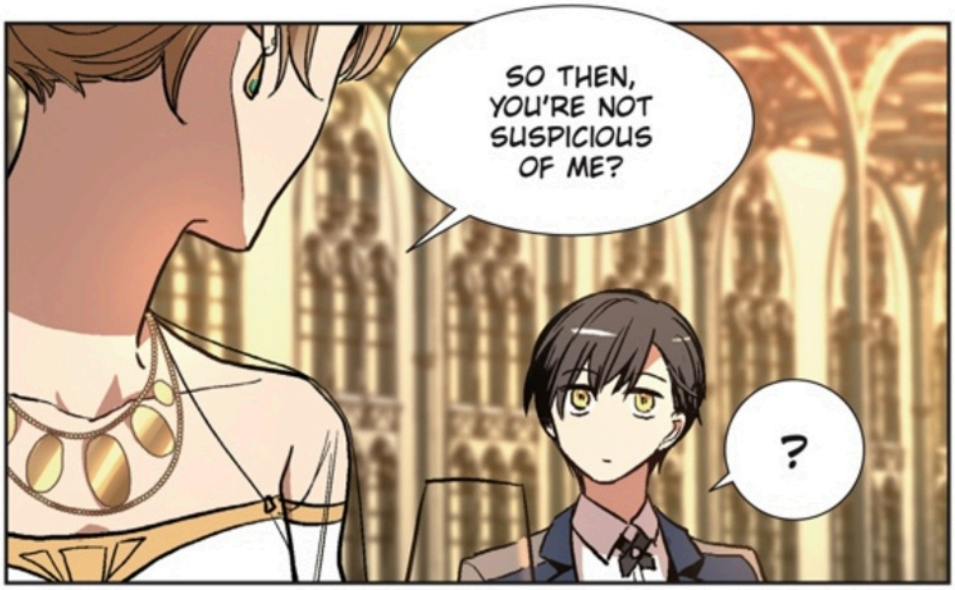
SNEAK
DEALING WITH NOAH IS BAD ENOUGH. I CAN'T AFFORD TO CATCH THE ATTENTION OF SOMEONE LIKE HER.
RAELIANA?
JOLT
Y-YES?!
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?
SHF
NOTHING... NOT A THING.
AH—I FEEL A BIT UNDER THE WEATHER!

RAELIANA.
NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO RECALL WHAT I TOLD YOU BEFORE.
BEFORE? WHAT?
THAT, WHEN I REQUIRE IT, YOU TOO SHALL PLAY THE ROLE OF MY FIANCÉE.
AND WHAT DO YOU NEED ME FOR RIGHT NOW?
NOD
FOR HER.
WHIP

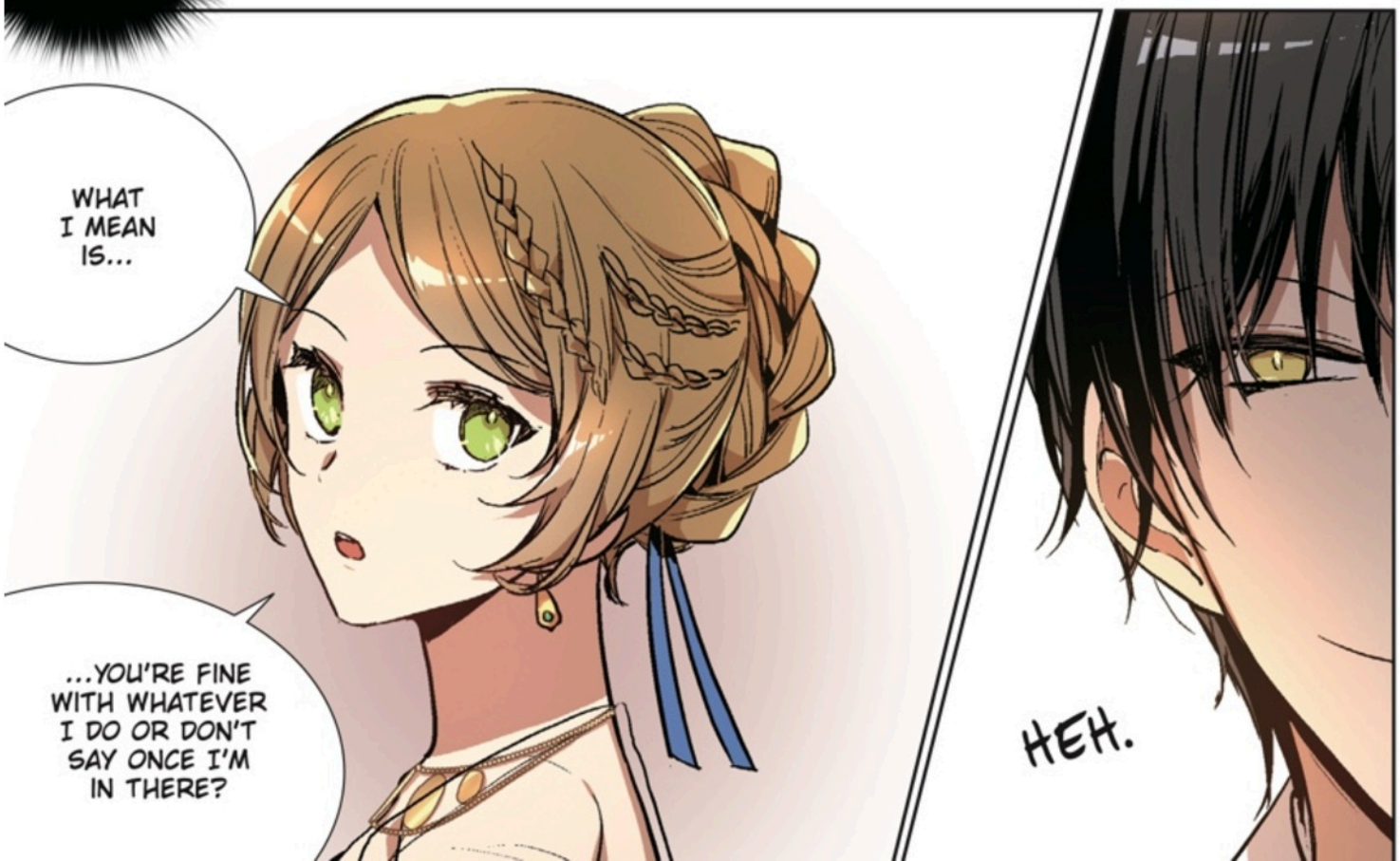

...? NOAH, DID I STOMP THE SENSE OUT OF YOU?
THAT'S VIVIAN SHAMAL. NO, WAIT. DON'T TELL ME—!
DOES HE PLAN TO THROW ME TO THE WOLVES SO HE CAN SAVE HIMSELF...?
MY WITS ARE ABOUT ME, IN FACT.
AND I MEANT THE WOMAN BESIDE VIVIAN...
...FREESE ERITEAL, THE YOUNG WIFE OF MARQUIS ERITEAL.
AH, THE GUY WITH THE MUSTACHE... ISN'T HE A TOTAL CRADLE-ROBBER?


THERE IS SOMETHING OF A SOCIAL CLUB AMONG THE WIVES OF THE OLD NOBILITY.
IT HAS NO PROPER NAME, AND THE IDENTITIES OF ITS MEMBERS ARE NOT DIVULGED.
RUMORS SAY THAT, THROUGH MUTUAL ACQUAINTANCES, THEY'VE RECRUITED THE SPOUSES OF CERTAIN HIGH-RANKING FIGURES.
CONSIDERING HOW INFLUENTIAL ALL OF THESE WOMEN ARE TO THOSE IN POWER...
...SOME EVEN JOKE THAT THE WORDS EXCHANGED IN THESE MEETINGS MIGHT WIND UP STEERING THE NATION.
AND FROM HER, RAELIANA...
...I NEED YOU TO ACQUIRE AN INVITATION.



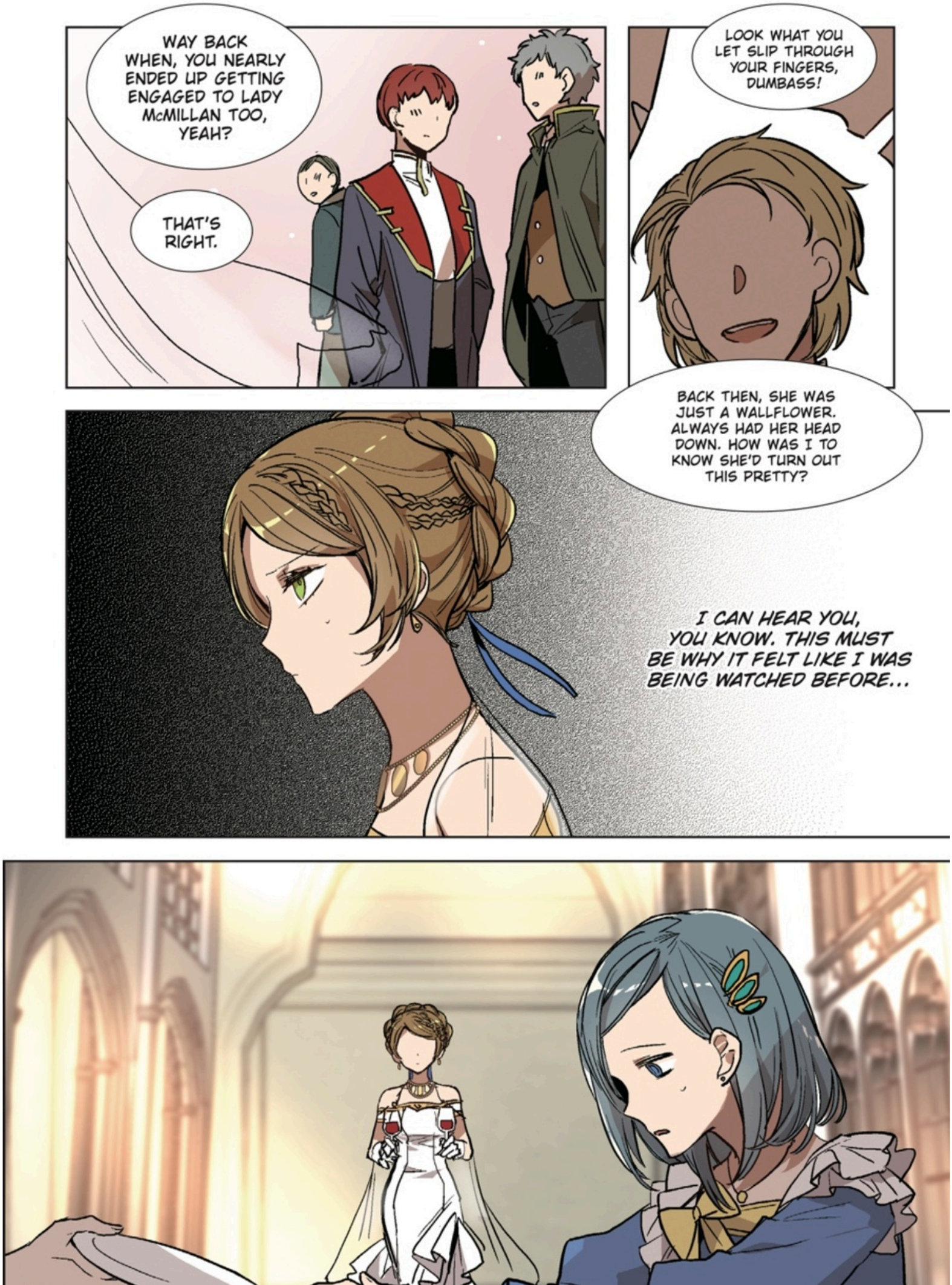


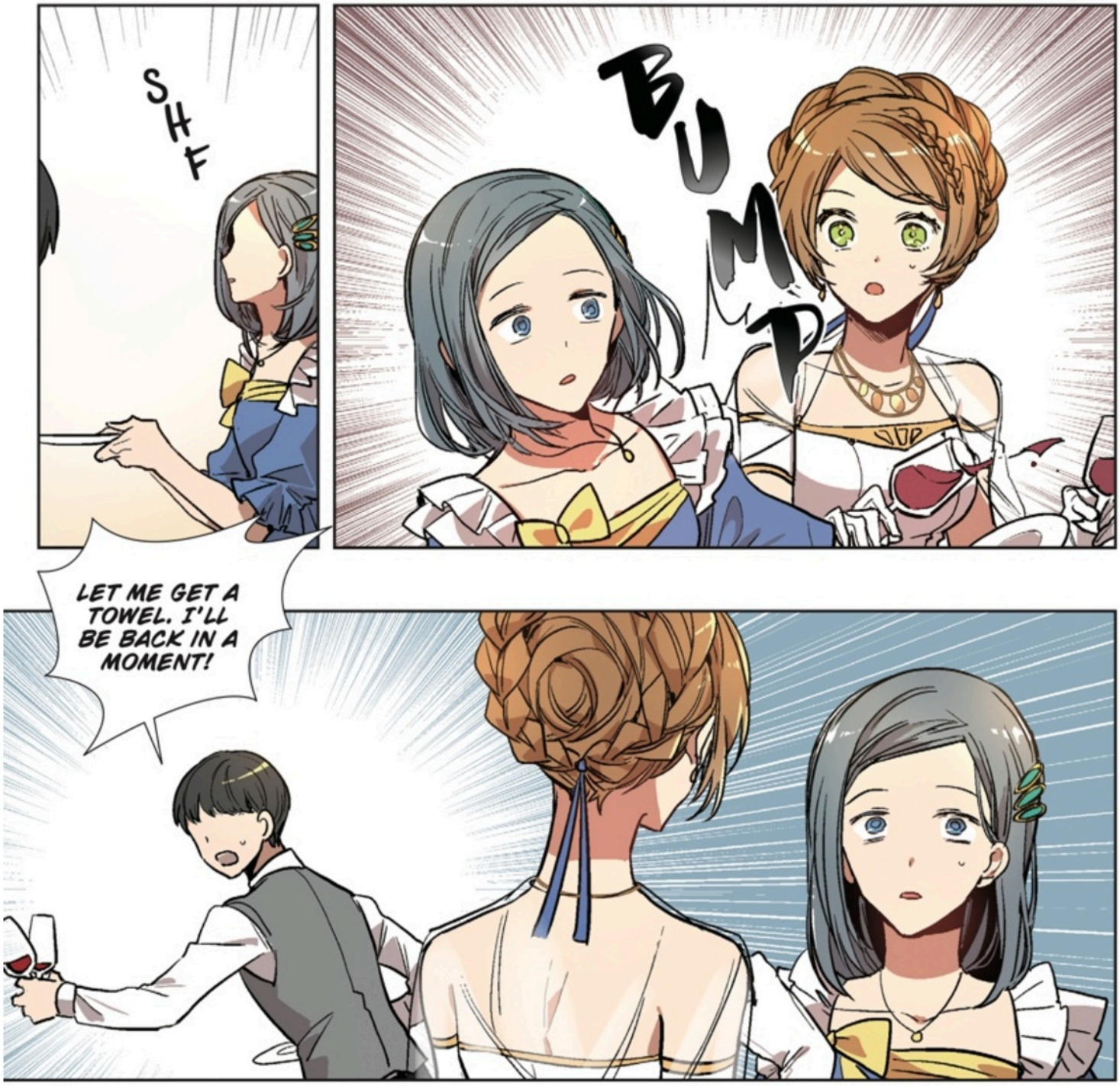
OF COURSE HE WAS SCHEMING SOMETHING.

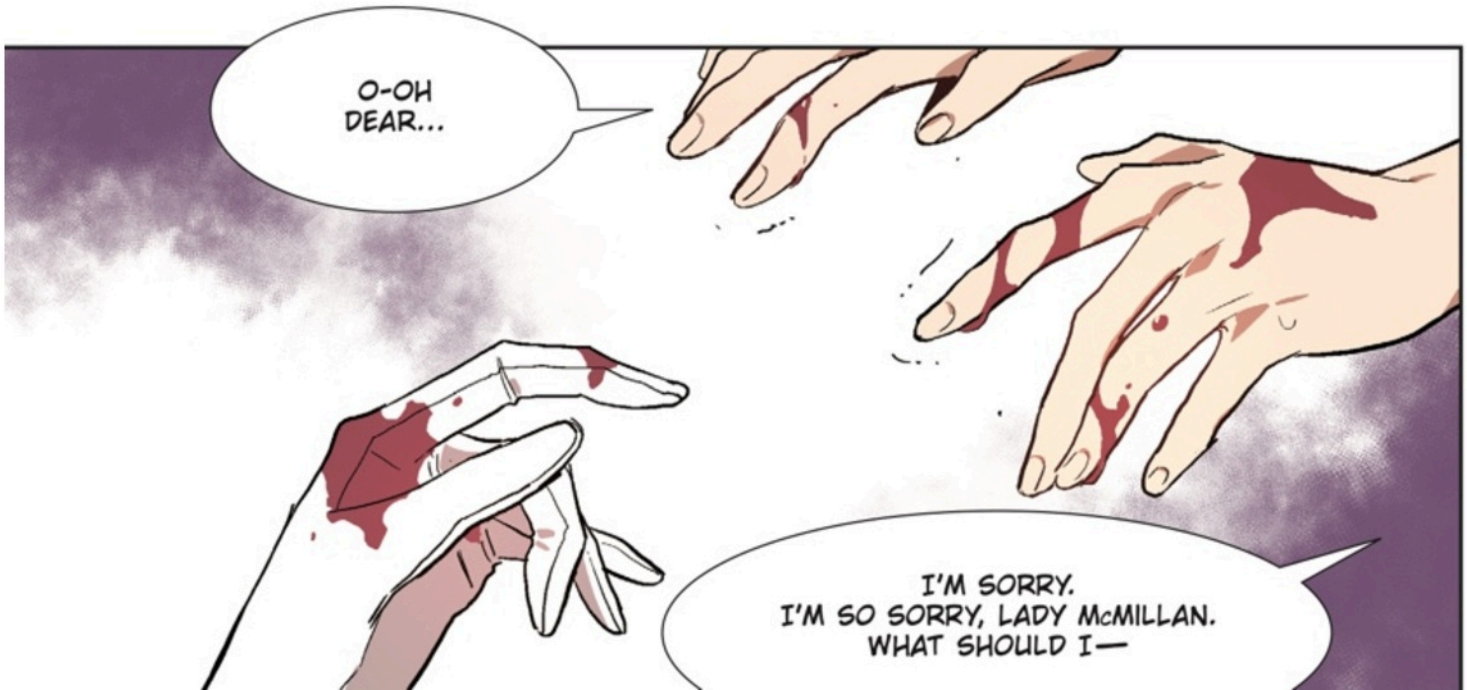


WELL, IF YOU CAN GET IN, THAT IS.
I BELIEVE THAT I SHOULD MAKE USE OF WHATEVER MEANS LIE AT MY DISPOSAL.
"MAKE USE"? THE NERVE OF HIM.
WHIRL
KLIK
DOING THIS FOR YOU MEANS YOU'LL OWE ME, GOT IT?
AND YOU'LL OWE ME BIG TIME, AT THAT.

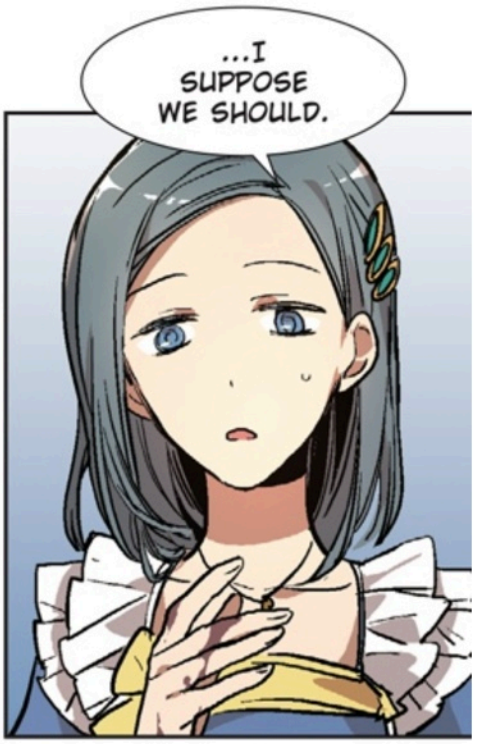
I BELIEVE THAT I SHOULD MAKE USE OF WHATEVER MEANS LIE AT MY DISPOSAL.
HEH...


WAY BACK WHEN, YOU NEARLY ENDED UP GETTING ENGAGED TO LADY McMILLAN TOO, YEAH?
THAT'S RIGHT.
LOOK WHAT YOU LET SLIP THROUGH YOUR FINGERS, DUMBASS!
BACK THEN, SHE WAS JUST A WALLFLOWER. ALWAYS HAD HER HEAD DOWN. HOW WAS I TO KNOW SHE'D TURN OUT THIS PRETTY?
I CAN HEAR YOU, YOU KNOW. THIS MUST BE WHY IT FELT LIKE I WAS BEING WATCHED BEFORE...

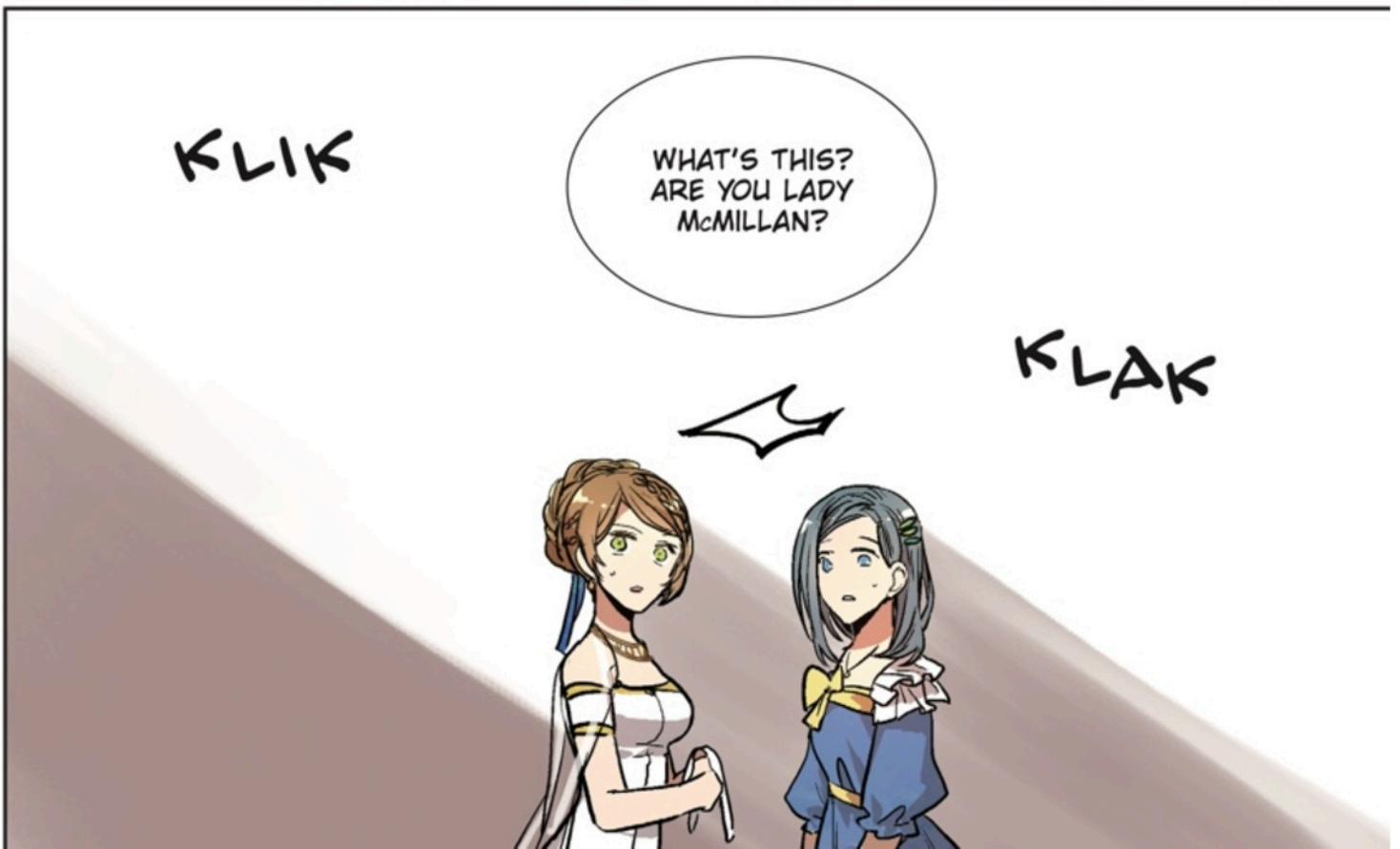

SHF
BUMP
LET ME GET A TOWEL. I'LL BE BACK IN A MOMENT!


O-OH DEAR...
I'M SORRY. I'M SO SORRY, LADY McMILLAN. WHAT SHOULD I—

IT'S ALL RIGHT, MADAM. FORGET ME—SHOULDN'T WE TAKE CARE OF YOUR HANDS FIRST?
OH...

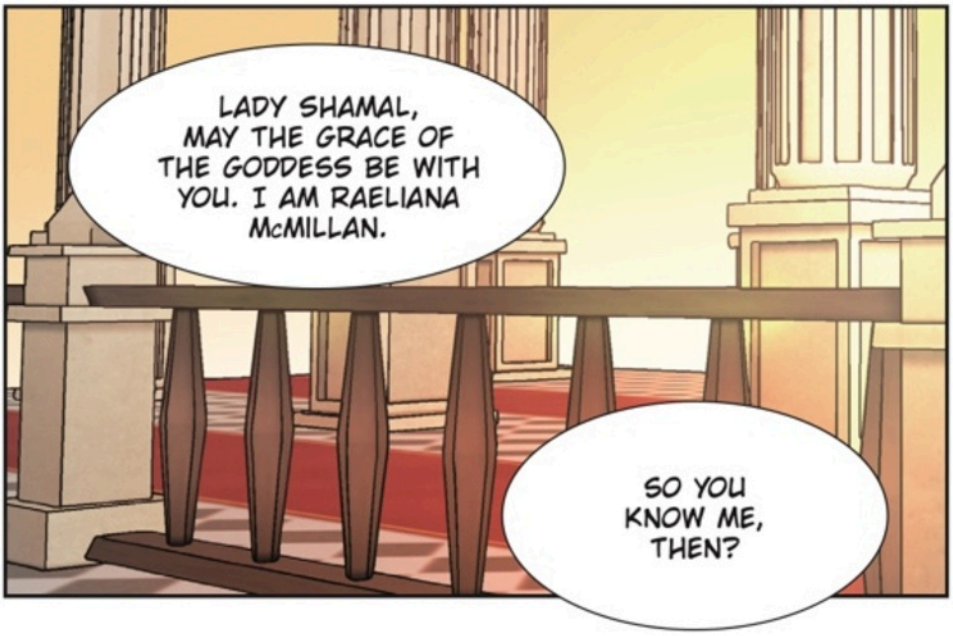

...I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD.

GOT HER.

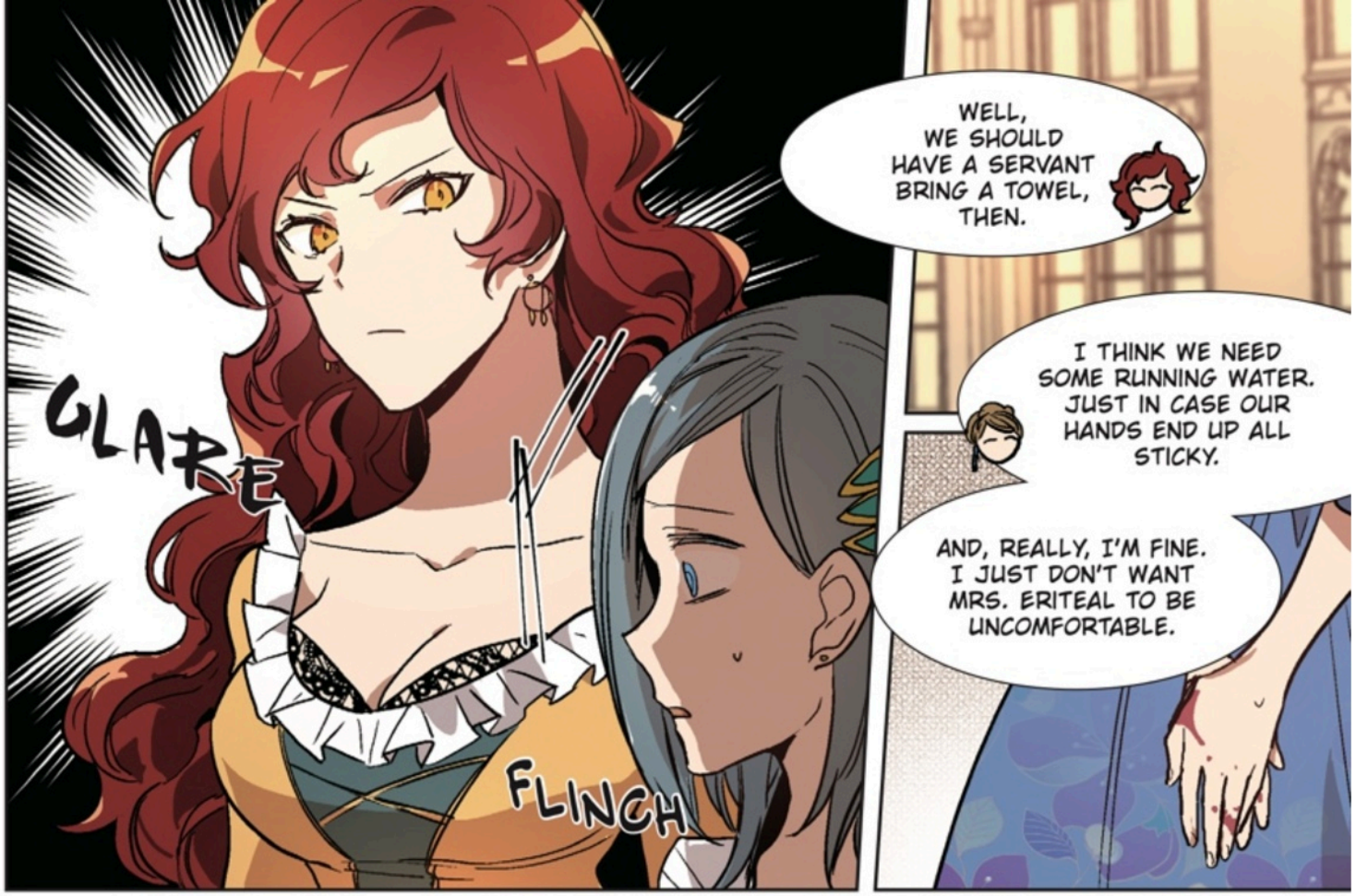

KLIK
WHAT'S THIS? ARE YOU LADY McMILLAN?
KLAK

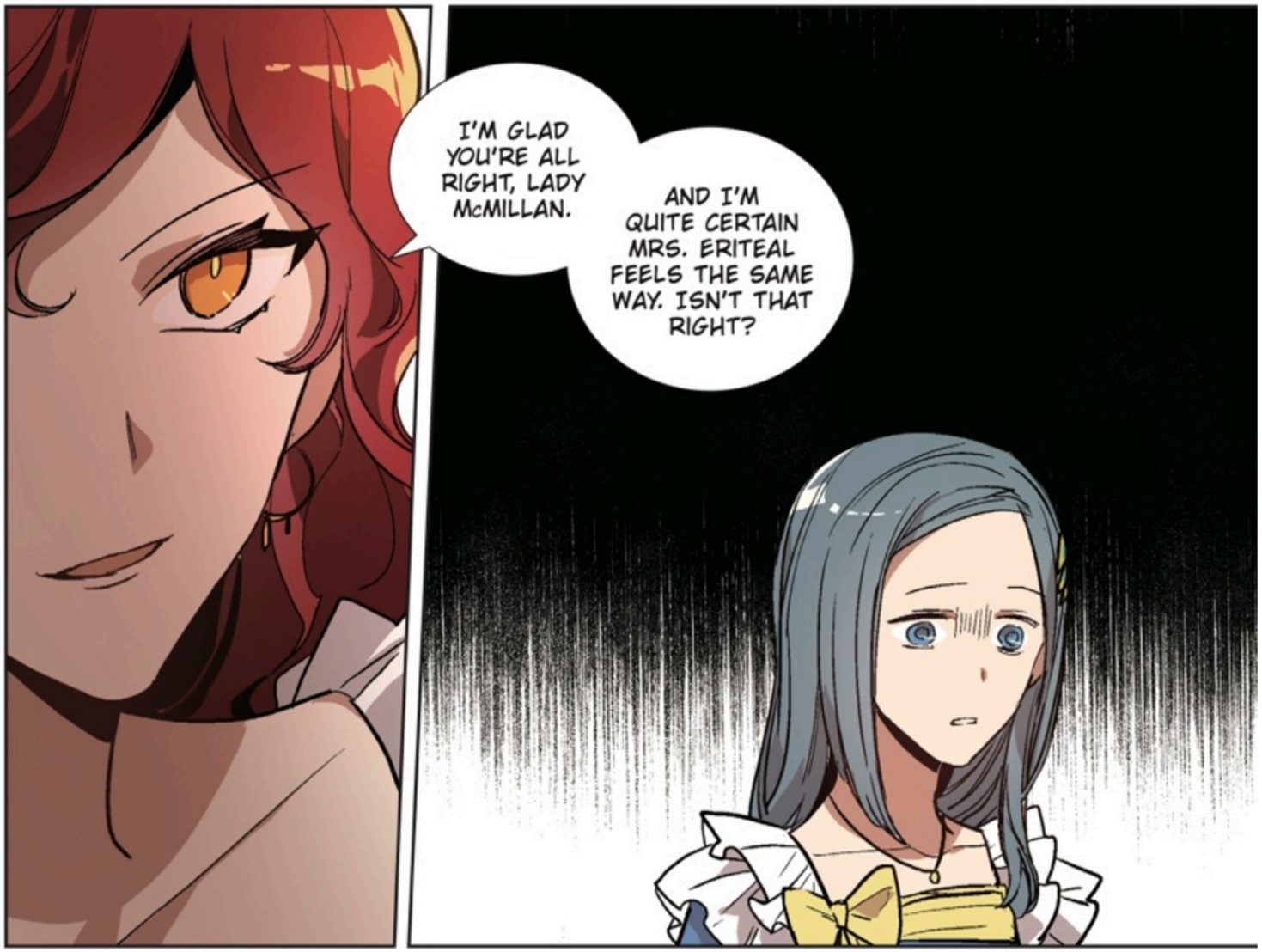
SO THIS IS WHERE WE MEET.

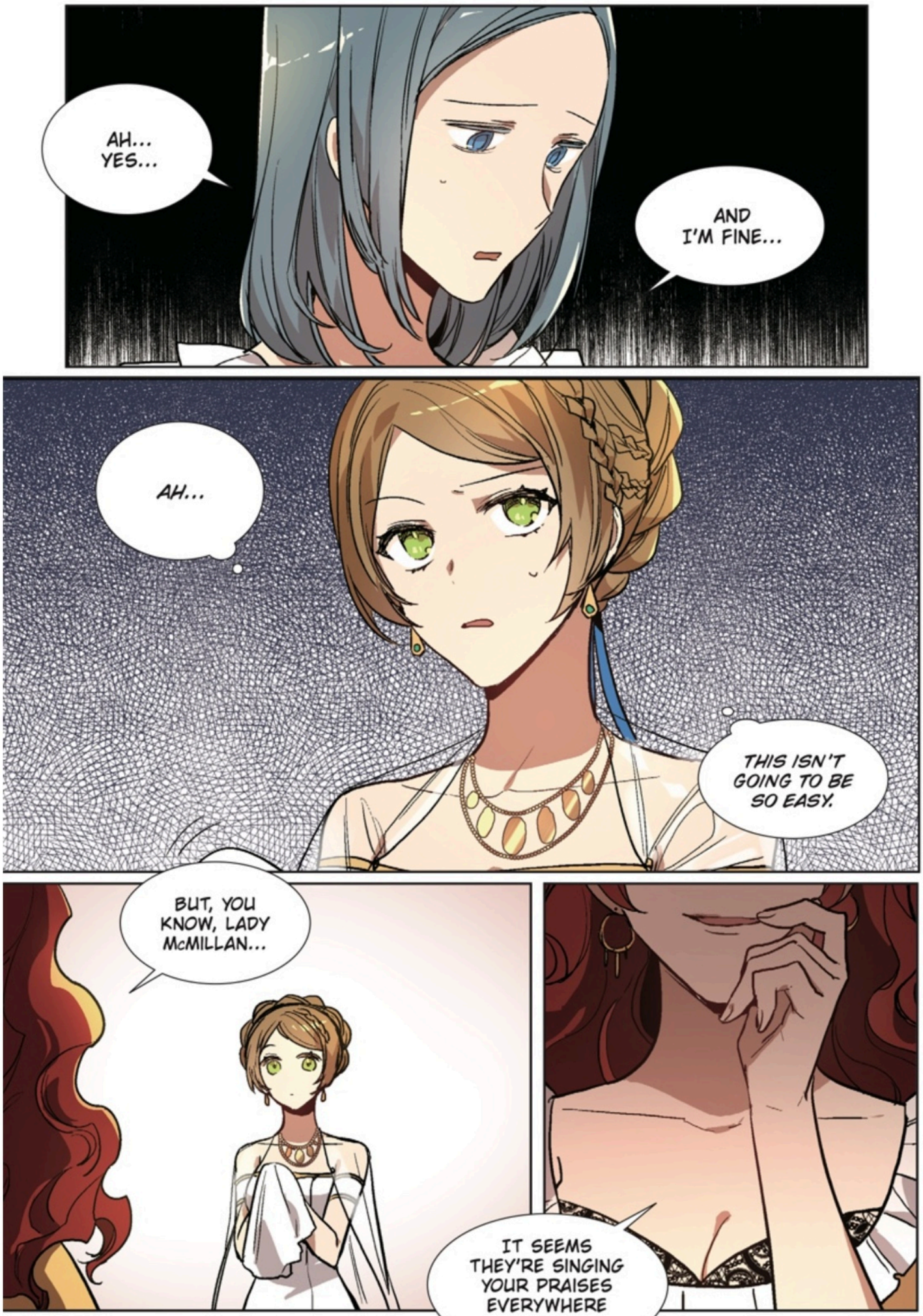
OH GOODNESS...

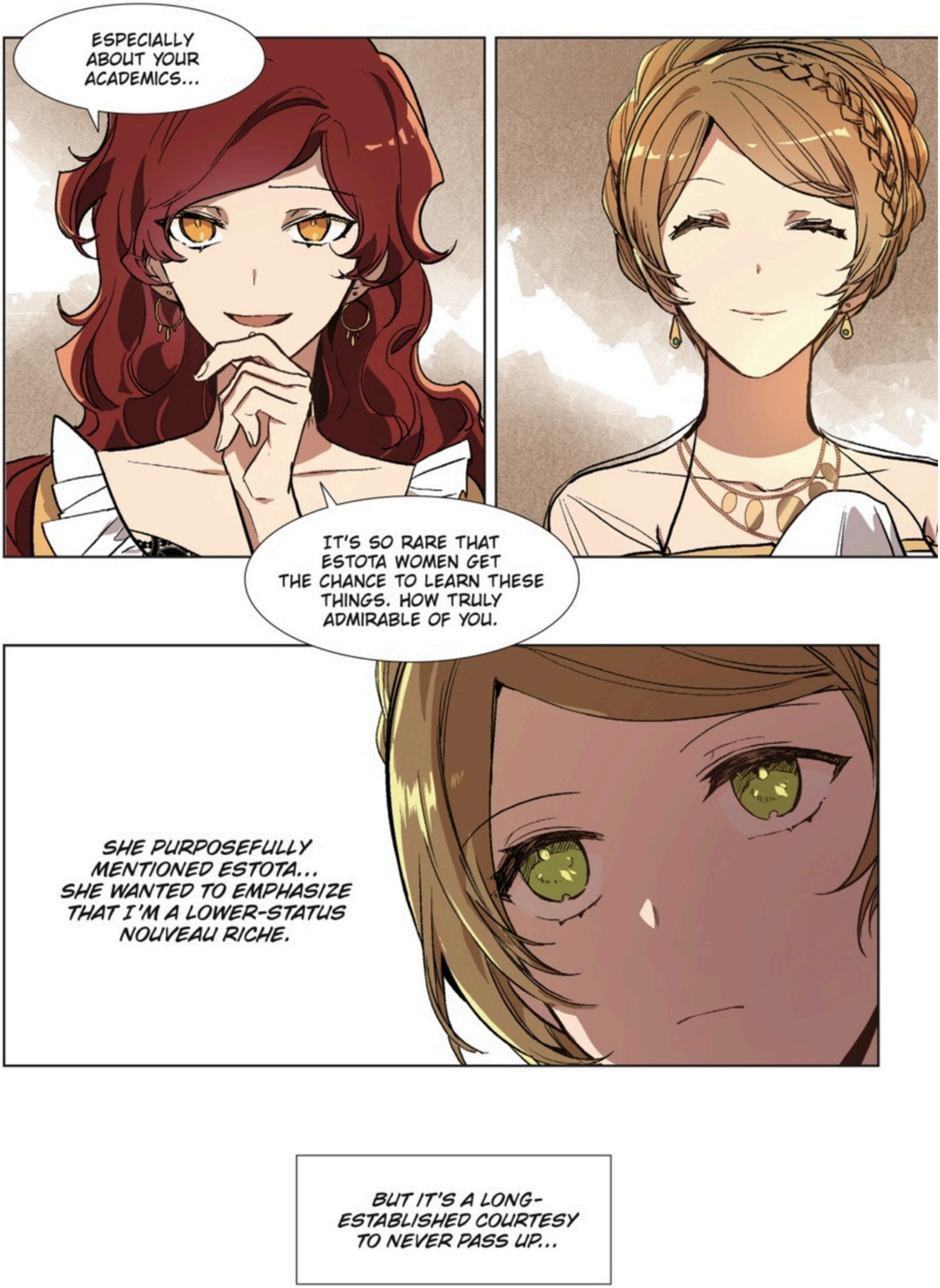

LADY SHAMAL, MAY THE GRACE OF THE GODDESS BE WITH YOU. I AM RAELIANA McMILLAN.
SO YOU KNOW ME, THEN?

WHY, YES—I DON'T THINK THERE'S A SOUL IN THIS KINGDOM WHO DOESN'T KNOW THE NAME VIVIAN SHAMAL.
PARDON, LADY SHAMAL, BUT WE SEEM TO HAVE FOUND OURSELVES IN A BIT OF AN EMBARRASSING SITUATION.


GLARE
FLINCH
WELL, WE SHOULD HAVE A SERVANT BRING A TOWEL, THEN.
I THINK WE NEED SOME RUNNING WATER. JUST IN CASE OUR HANDS END UP ALL STICKY.
AND, REALLY, I'M FINE. I JUST DON'T WANT MRS. ERITEAL TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE.


I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, LADY McMILLAN.
AND I'M QUITE CERTAIN MRS. ERITEAL FEELS THE SAME WAY. ISN'T THAT RIGHT?


AH... YES...
AND I'M FINE...
AH...
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE SO EASY.
BUT, YOU KNOW, LADY McMILLAN...
IT SEEMS THEY'RE SINGING YOUR PRAISES EVERYWHERE I TURN.


ESPECIALLY ABOUT YOUR ACADEMICS...
IT'S SO RARE THAT ESTOTA WOMEN GET THE CHANCE TO LEARN THESE THINGS. HOW TRULY ADMIRABLE OF YOU.
SHE PURPOSEFULLY MENTIONED ESTOTA... SHE WANTED TO EMPHASIZE THAT I'M A LOWER-STATUS NOUVEAU RICHE.
BUT IT'S A LONG-ESTABLISHED COURTESY TO NEVER PASS UP...

...NEITHER WINE NOR WAR.
I'M FLATTERED THAT YOU THINK SO HIGHLY OF ME.

To be continued in Volume 2...

Volume 2 Preview

"Noah, have you ever loved anyone?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I'm a duke of the royal family."

The hunt is on—the aristocrats and knights are tracking down monsters as offerings for the ladies! Noah throws a fit over Raeliana gifting Adam a handkerchief and demands it for himself. Vivian Shamal begins tormenting Raeliana in earnest. And the whereabouts of Noah's "fated woman," Beatrice, are all but unknown...

CAN THEIR ENGAGEMENT KEEP GOING ON LIKE THIS...?

Find out in...

Why Raeliana Ended Up at the Duke's Mansion

2

Why Raeliana Ended Up at the Duke's Mansion 1

Whale

Original story by Milcha

Translation: DAVID ODELL ✻ Lettering: CHIHO CHRISTIE

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Why Raeliana Ended Up at the Duke's Mansion, Volume 1
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